THE LONDON
APHRODITE

edited by Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen.

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EDITORIAL MANIFESTOS

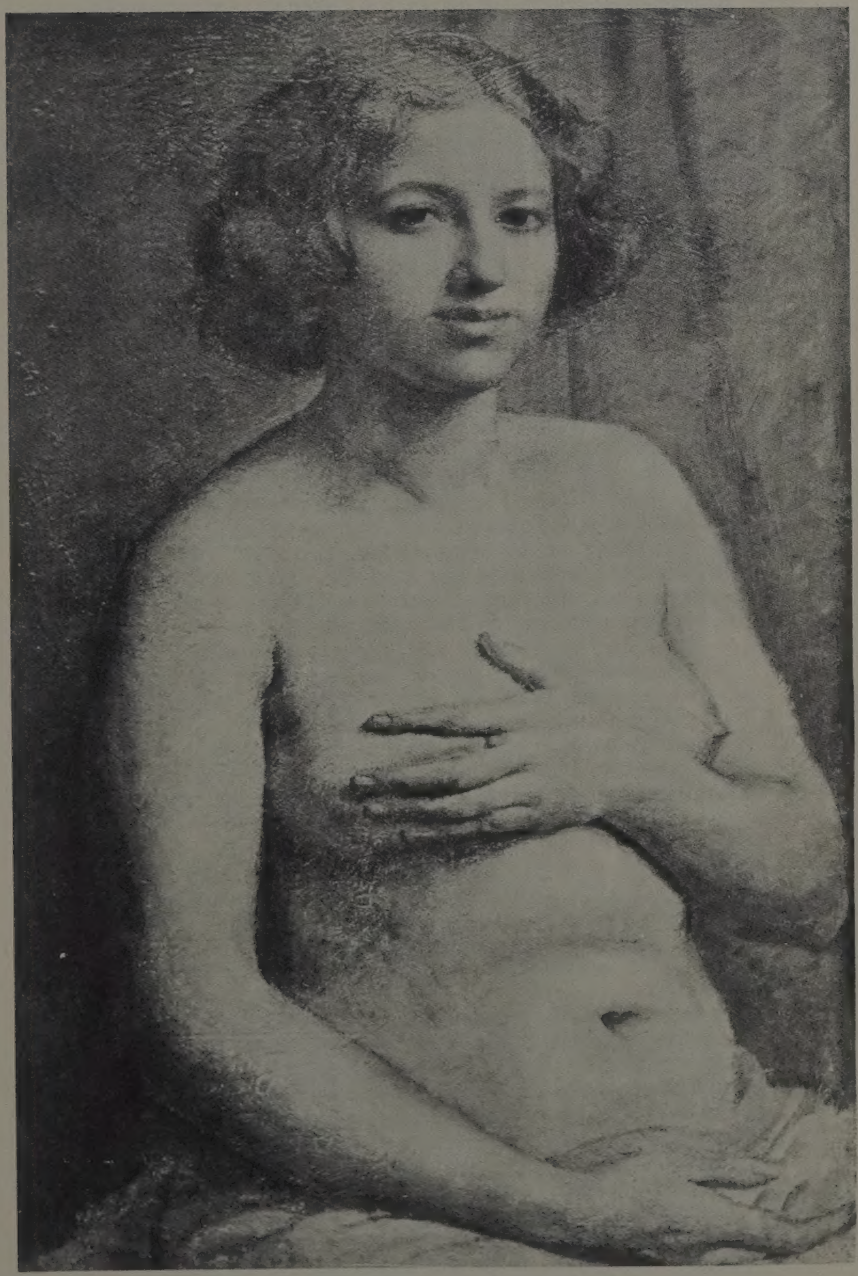
(*a*) We stand for a point of view which equally outrages the modernist and the reactionary. It is certain that J. C. Squire and T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and Dean Inge, Humbert Wolfe and Robert Graves, E. E. Cummings and Alfred Noyes, Maritain and James Douglas, Roger Fry and William Orpen, would, if compelled by physical force to read our magazine, heartily (or at least irritatedly) dislike it. If we take any of these names in vain we shall apologise in due course to the protesting owner and cheerfully pay the libel costs. However, while awaiting such regeneration, we declare war against all academicians, whether modernistically disguised or smugly official—against all prophets from the gutters of resentment whether the noise proceeds from the mere press or exasperated theories of intellectualising impotence—against all sentimentalists who degrade the emotional theme by trivially pretty modes—against all debauchees of the distracted nerves or ascetics of the intellect who abstract the fluid geometries from their true action.

We affirm Life, and for definition quote Nietzsche: Spirit is that life which itself cuts into life. We affirm Beauty, and by that term understand a sensual harmony, a homogeneous ecstasy, which, constructing intellectually, yet hates nothing so much as the dry cogs of the objectified and objectifying intellect.

In pursuit of our aim we shall be thoroughly biased and unjust at times when to fritter analyses on minute qualifications is to sacrifice the larger justice. Thus, T. S. Eliot has made many (but not so very many) persuasively acute remarks on odd literary relations; but to trace all these out and allow him marks for these in an article such as *The Modern Consciousness* would only be to distract from the real significance of his mind, which is one of progressive negativity. Similarly, Wyndham Lewis makes many attacks which are excessively justified and to the point; but Lewis himself is an obstruction of the worst type in the road of a vital integration. Where space allows, lesser justices will be attempted. Otherwise, to the central significance, the relation between the subject and that life which itself cuts into life, yet balances itself upon the image of beauty.

We shall draw blood, even from the bloodless. J. L.

(*b*) Subscribing to the above with the supplementary comments that it is amusing to be alive, but that this is a question of blood in the arteries and you cannot get blood from a Stein: that the emptiest moderns make most noise, owing to the Decline of the Best: that modernity, like maternity, is already out of date, owing to correspondence from France and American specialities: that the Transcendental Unity of Apperception (Kant) has been overcome by the Transatlantic Disunity of Introspection (cant); but that Freud means Joy and not Joyce: and that consequently there is No Sale for Poetry because there is no poetry for sale, the nigger being in the woodpile of (musical) Time and (middle) Western Man when he (she or it) comes to Europe with a literary aspiration: that the gods whelp those who whelp themselves, which means instead of Cummings, They Went, because Beauty is (see page opposite *et seq.*) possible. P. R. S.



"THE LONDON APHRODITE"

Reproduction of a torso in oils painted by Lionel Ellis.

THE MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

An Essay towards an Integration

by JACK LINDSAY

(I) Modernity is a smug term, the present vogue of which would seem to imply that we are the first people to be aware that we live in our own portion of Time. This is a pleasant illusion, partly the result of the speeding-up of fashion and aftermath of the Victorian millennium; though it is also obvious that Homer as implicitly as Keats felt the strangeness of Time's contracting bubble:

> And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
> These lovers fled away into the storm—

and we are no more consciously "tendential" than, say, the Romantic Movements in France and Germany. However, under the warring complacencies of the cliques and the official criticism, I think that this vogue does state a peculiar necessity which is defined by another favourite word: Transition. We are intently in movement; so much so, that an expression must be frankly experimental before it can be admitted to have achieved anything, and if every architectonic device does not stick alarmingly into the air out of a minimum of digested material, the work is considered amorphous, reactionary or romantic—unless of course it is genuinely amorphous under the pretence of psychological experiment.

This tawdry flux, which has neither the steady rush of a river nor the violent concentration of a whirlpool, yet must have its laws—though those half-drowned individuals who have scrambled dripping out on to the banks and proclaimed the need of a synthesis have mostly had little else than the vomit of their own ill-success to contribute to this worthy but difficult task. Here is one more proclamation: I trust not one more vomit.

My method is avowedly personal. If it is authentically individual, it will have universal application, since to penetrate to the core of self is simultaneously to make oneself unique and to include universal humanity. It is only accidental, egoistic, not egocentric, accretions on the construction of Thought which lessen its validity.

But to begin by seeking an abstract universal at work is inevitably to miss it. To seek to evaluate modernity by abstracting from each group or apostle that which is the central pronunciamento, to tabulate all these odds and ends faithfully, and then to discover what general criteria may be evolved which will glucosely stretch over the mass with least contradiction—that, which is the academic and historical method of making a synthesis, *must* fail to rediscover the human universal behind the whole conflicting muddle. It must fail to find the essences.

These, I claim, can only be found by wading into the mellay and essaying, as partisan, to be true to one's deepest experience of life and art in every passing criticism. That is to judge the material, not as isolated completed things, but as imperfect

aspirations into the whole human future, the eternity of myself. That is to make self-knowledge the ultimate moral and æsthetic judgments, both. For what use can a form, a texture, a harmony be to me except in so far as it relates to my own experience, as it deepens æsthetically or clarifies morally my relation to my own past, present, and future?

I therefore take as my criterion the concrete universal, the human dynamic.

(II) I COME then to what seem to me the primary necessities behind our self-consciousness as being transitional, caught in a time-process which cannot be solidified by the act of faith which is Beauty. One quotation will carry one back to the threshold of this emotion:

> Man is a rope connecting animal and beyond-man: a rope over a precipice. Dangerous over, dangerous on the way, dangerous looking backward, dangerous shivering and making a stand. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what can be loved in man is that he is a transition and a destruction. I love the great despisers, for they are the great adorers, they are arrows of longing for the other shore.

That is Nietzsche's voice, the voice of the Forerunner—not that the creatures of our transition are his creators in whom life is a bridge of lightning. They are rather the excreta of inertia upon his energy, the automatic thinning-out of his trumpets. It is of another generation Nietzsche comes as courier. It is the criticism of that generation I seek to find.

Nevertheless the new stress, the new nervous excitation and exasperation, comes into existence with Nietzsche's thought—Wagner's music its chief comrade as jangler of weak nerves and stimulus of heroic emotions.

The Renaissance produced no philosophy of active life, however, it assumed a vital æsthetic in its expression. The nearest it arrived to teleology was in the derisive lyricism of Rabelais; but strictly, Montaigne was its intellectual enunciator, mocking at man's desire to cripple himself with lies, chains, shackles, manacles and rocks, but opposing only a passive disdain, a gentle Roman dignity. For the rest Bacon might have done much, but aloof in his homosexual scepticism he turned to scientific method the scrutiny he should have given fully to man. Philosophy marched from abstraction to abstraction, the only conclusion of which could be Hume's pertinent use of logic to sever all the knots of divine law, with the Scotch Common-sense Philosophers tying them up again with penny bits of string. Kant, a great destroyer with a disguise of infinitely tortuous terminology, destroyed metaphysics by carrying to a logical precision far ahead of any predecessor the proofs for the existence of God and then calmly annihilating them. Frightened at this vast god-slaughter, he resuscitated the deity with a salve of moral proof; but even then found himself floundering back into danger in *The Critique of Judgment* (which consequently nobody reads) and gave up the task. However, his work remained, its stimulus, behind the deadening veils of style, vitally destructive.

Hegel carried on this work, supplanting for the first time since the Hellenes the abstract universal with the human complex: his dialectic bored down into the human process as significance. His limitations do not matter here. Enough that he saw human activity as reality.

On to this scene arrived Nietzsche. Absorbing the whole philosophical tradition at one gulp, he intuitively completed the cycle of Plato—Aristotle—Kant—Hegel, and saw in what direction the new cycle must face. He formulated a Dionysian philosophy: a return to the Platonic knowledge of man as the measure of all things, with a new passionate sense of the constructive essences of man himself. Balancing his vision of life as process, flux, will, movement, he introduced (instead of the abstractly incarnated Being of Hegel or the Nirvanic will of Schopenhauer) the symbol of Eternal Recurrence—that is, the liberated essence of man achieving the dynamic judgment. In other words, his Eternity is Plato's Form of Good.

But above all things he made a fresh moral analysis. If it is man's purpose to achieve this self-integration, to know himself vitally and freely, he cries, then we must examine all history, all our own experience, to sever that which is dead or poisoned from the human future. The terrific perception was at once borne in upon him that almost all man's social, moral, religious and æsthetic activities moved towards the abstraction of fear instead of the concretion of love. It was then he made the Dionysian onslaught upon man with which our nerves still tremble.

His statement that though Eternity (the liberated judgment) is the goal, yet if we are to remain true to life we must submit incessantly our Apollonian intellect to the Dionysian tumult of experience, and that therefore, to escape the static abstraction, we must be for ever dynamically transitional—this, I say, comes out (forgotten though the source be) in the wavering nervous disintegrations of our decade.

(III) Consequently the few half-drowned escapees from the flux, looking around for the villain who pushed them from behind into the demented waters, are right when they yield to Nietzsche the homage of their hate. Wyndham Lewis is most typical of these irritated persons, and though his criticisms of Nietzsche are uniformly bathetic and on the moron-level of the newspapers who howled at the Nietzsche-Treitschke conspiracy, yet his instincts at least are right, whatever one thinks of his intellect. It would be as well to take him as representing the dissatisfied element of self-conscious modernity, since, in England, no one has seriously challenged him or constructed a better general attitude. His debt to France I shall discuss later.

Lewis is very vague as to primary causes or definitions, but any thinker in whom he can discover the stigmata of Time-process is proclaimed part of a Camorra to undermine stability and cast it into the sea of hungry sensation. Seeing a decade of fluctuous fools, he decides wisdom must lie in a stony mechanism of intellect. Nietzsche is glimpsed only as a frenzied megaphone in the distance, a Hunnish outlaw announcing Force. Bergson seems the Moses whose wand tapped the stone and set the

cascades of Time frothing around modernity's flippant ankles—though actually Hegel would be seen as that magician if any logic or philosophical culture were employed.

This analysis is carried on so as to involve anyone at all who admits Time as a philosophic symbol, whether he be an academic neo-Hegelian like Bosanquet, or an intelligent one like Croce, who is working, rather abstractly, to evolve an æsthetic and whose work as carried on by Gentile results in at least the most delicate formulation of the act of perception so far made—I am not concerned with his theory of history.* Lumped in with these are the Communists, into whom Lewis pumps a philosophy compounded of the Materialist Conception of History and the Tolstoian cult of the primitive: profound thinkers like Einstein and Freud, because they upset the conventional canons of Lewis's recessive abstractions: mystics of the abdomen like D. H. Lawrence: and, of course, the chief German theorist of the moment on History, Spengler, seeking fictitiously to evolve a rhythm of national life.

One is at a loss to criticise this criticism; it has no end or beginning at which to take it. Yet as it is seriously accepted, one must disentangle it somehow. Partly it is a muddled perception that all the modern cults are an evasion of the real problem of creativeness; but though involving some acute remarks such as the analysis of the unfortunate Gertrude Stein, where the subject being utterly trivial Lewis's mind operates remarkably well, this perception is vitiated by the fact that Lewis himself has no better knowledge of creativeness than the puppets he transfixes.

Behind it, however, remains the attack on the Time cult with Bergson as arch-heretic, and this is worth examining, as we may hope to find the truth (i.e. a vital principle) somewhere between Lewis and Stein—or rather, between the elements they represent.

Bergson attempted to create a vision of the creative surge of life, and, missing the subtle antithetical values behind the most dithyrambic of Nietzsche's utterances, he fell himself into the surge. Seeking to add Spirit to Darwinism, he largely did nothing but give a pseudo-poetical version of Evolution excitedly disappearing down its own vortices of rhythm. Since the antithesis of energy is only abstractly perceived, the rhythm of Time (a fine conception if finely handled) becomes as abstract a process finally as any mathematical computation. For there is an irrational abstraction as well as a rational one. Similarly his effort to define free will (though again made in the right direction) ends in only a flushed inversion of Determinism. Beginning with the effort to show the act *of* Spirit, he ends by showing act *as* a hectic mechanization of Spirit.

It is not, however, his actual thought that matters here. It is rather the mystical glamour which he exercised, investing Movement, Act, Time, with strange spiritual fervours; and it

* Lewis' lack of culture is shown by his inability to distinguish Marx (a ruthless effort to determine the factor of the belly in human *organization*), Spengler (an effort to trace the rhythm of *Race*), and Croce (an effort to continue the *dialectic* of history) —three men only to be classed together in so far as each failed to make the Nietzschean relation of history to the Eternal Recurrence of self—just as Lewis himself fails.

is as this prophet of the inspired Flux that he relates to such cliques as the Futurists, Vorticists, etc.—and with a little lax extension we can correlate his attitude with the abandonment to nervous ecstasies and agonies in most modern music, from Scriabin to Schönberg; with the effort to symbolize emotions in a form disregarding their construction in Time, such as the Expressionists; or—wrongly here, since the analysis is balanced on a knowledge of integration—with the effort of Freud to get to the pure extra-temporal energies of the spirit.

Bergson is of course not responsible for all this. He is merely another of the symptoms. The cause is primarily the dangerous floods of energy loosened by Nietzsche which, if you cannot control, you must allow to disintegrate you. But it is no use to get outside the area of those floods and denounce the wrecks within it. As well refuse to live, because sensitivity implies suffering. In denouncing a force like Nietzsche you are merely crying out against the painful structure of life itself, which can yet be compelled into exaltation.

Nietzsche then liberated powerfully a new concept of the unity of the dynamic judgment, and so as well (since all energy is dual) cast life into an arena of fiercer conflict if the unity of his concept is to be preserved.

Only two thinkers have so far preserved that unity in their sphere of thought: Freud and Einstein.

(IV) Freud shows the widening-out of Nietzsche's cry that man must face himself and his own Eternity (his completed identity), and that only by a continuous passionate intensification of his consciousness can he escape the nemesis of muddying the crystal springs of self, of energy.

In short, Nietzsche proclaimed that the individual is, in essence, all desire; and Freud has demonstrated this negatively, by showing what happens if he fails the immanent desire of self.

Finally, in *Beyond the Pleasure-Principle*, Freud reaffirms the terrifying third essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*, showing that all man's life is a curve towards death: two forces alone defying that curve—one, blind: sex; the other: consciousness.

(V) Einstein defines the physics of Eternal Recurrence: the web of Relativity which sends man on the alarming search for a fixed point in his soul—ruthlessly waves aside all lesser judgments, and forces on him the conviction that only where rhythm and unity are equally balanced has he any stability whatsoever . . . otherwise he is back in the old universe of absolutely evanescent relations.

By taking away all externalized props of measurement and putting in their place only a subtle series of shifting relations (I speak my own idiom, and the proof of Einstein's profundity is that he is instantly translatable into all terms of experience) —Einstein forces one to transcend them by means of the hypothetical fixed point. This must be, for all experience, the self; and for the judgment of the self to have validity it must at one and the same time arrest the flux by a unified conception and yet keep contact with all its relations.

The result is a unified rhythm: continuity of desire.

(VI) For Nietzsche (and the specialized versions of Freud and Einstein) do not submit to the flux. These courageous minds desire conflict in order to demonstrate their power. Through all their thought persists the antithetical feeling which can conceive simultaneously the two severed ends of energy, the inner self and the world of experience. This is not so much a question of surface-statement as of the continued approximation of conflicting symbols to the unity of the conception behind them. For instance, the attitude I attribute to Einstein is hardly explicit in his work, but is to be *felt* by his treatment, his organization of the disjointed material of physics. It is this which makes his work affirmative, constructive—while the pictures of the Futurists which are built on what is, from the crude angle of Lewis, a similar attitude to the relativity of objects in time and space, are altogether futile and destructive.

Nietzsche balances the outward flowing energy on the inwardly concentrating form. His attitude is: we do not conquer the problem of Time and Movement by setting up some rigid schemata, a metaphysic which essays to lift intellect out of the flux. No scholastic quibbling can truly deny the petrifaction at once resulting.*

Neither do we conquer Movement by surrendering ourselves up to it, contented with the Bergsonian act as a kind of hurdles along the continuum: a spasm of homogeneous energy.

We conquer Movement by keeping our minds for ever orientated towards the instinctive core of life, letting this plasmic energy soak us through and through, not perverting it by abstractly moral views of its nature. But side by side with this the valuing self must be for ever active, joyously immersing in the tides of experience the symbol of self-knowledge. When the self finds its own core of energy, which flows out of this intellectual symbol *into* life, stimulated by some sudden harmony between itself and the stream of the instincts, it will be filled with love and therefore with the need to perpetuate its own delighted harmony: to beget an image of itself upon life.

This harmony is the moment of Eternity, the conquest of Time. For it includes both the fluid mass and the abstract construction in a third thing, the dynamic form.

So Nietzsche from a completely different angle returns to Plato's solution.

And this solution obliterates equally the intellectual scholasticism proceeding from Aristotle (Plato's evil) and the sensationalism proceeding from Bergson (Nietzsche's evil).†

* This quibble goes that because an abstraction arrests the shapeless flux, it is then a concentration of the diffused, a crystallization of the vague, a solidification of the fluid. This is true of the intellect as postulated by Nietzsche, true of the dynamic act by which the self identifies itself with and severs itself from its material. But it is altogether untrue of the Thomist position; and Lewis incredibly attaches it to himself, though as defined by his own art and his general criticism he is one of the least concrete men alive. More of this later.

† Not that I contemn Bergson. He really has a diffused sense of the creative contact with life, but he tends to let this sense evaporate in a static psychology. Though he understands that only the self acting as a whole can be free, he does not realise what makes a unity of the psyche. It is his theory of Perception which gives him away, exposing him as only a Determinist with subtler terminology: an automatist of the flux instead of a mechanist of reason. We therefore see in him Nietzsche's philosophy falling away from its own centre.

(VII) But in order that we may not remain dupes of the contemporary muddle like Lewis, we must go further back and take the various moves to pieces. We must return to the beginning of the second episode of the Renaissance.

The eighteenth century was the negative period between two periods of energy. The full proud bustling force of the Renaissance proper reached its height in the noble forms of Rubens, its poetry found its deepest ecstasy and most intimate questionings in Shakespeare. Music remained trivial, leaving esoteric beauties perhaps, but finding no great synthesis. There was a lull, a recoil even. Michelangelo at the heart of the Renaissance had tried to distort its rhythm with a Gothic dispersal of energy in torment. Milton did the same now to English poetry.

When energy began to flow again, it had to regather the already created consciousness of the Renaissance, relate its contact with antiquity (which the Renaissance itself could gaily assume) and build up a further synthesis. This addition was Music.

Consciousness began magnificently with Blake . . . only some inhibition kept him out of the contemporary action and strangled his poetic development. Still, his moral enunciation of the problem of energy is unsurpassed. He saw that all energy is holy, that all values proceed from the imaginative act, that infinity could only come to pass " by an improvement of sensual enjoyment."

His inhibition cut him off from all action on Keats and Byron to whom he would have been invaluable. These two poets failed to arrive at the synthesis, though both almost penetrated to it from opposite sides. Poetry lapsed. The fine set of *epigonoi*, who would have widened the synthesis if Keats and Byron had arrived at a unification of the æsthetic and human activities of poetry, produced scattered work, good and bad, but all scattered—Beddoes (the sincerest, who committed suicide), Browning, Tennyson, Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, Francis Thompson.

The only unity through all these is a diffused effort to develop the colour-image, that peculiar merging of sensual essences which is most deeply the property of music. (It is this concentration I refer to as musical energy—not melody, etc.)

(VIII) Painting shows a similar effort and muddle. Turner achieved the knowledge of light's action; he used light as an explosive, mixing it with his landscapes to blast them to pieces, hoping to catch their significance at the moment just as the explosion irradiates the forms. As he went on he came closer to the actual fury of light, impatiently seeking the pure unity of its bomb-like scattering . . . submitting perhaps to the nostalgia for pure beauty which is the artist's greatest danger.

Goya and Delacroix used a somewhat slowed-down version of this in their effort to redefine man while catching at the hem of light's skirts—Goya, most interested in broad contrasts of drama, scraps of emotion preferably bleeding: Delacroix, most interested in tracing new pulses of vibratory life.

Turner's great explosion left the whole plastic sensibility a

trifle tattered. Even Delacroix did not fully unify his new aspect of colour and form; and if Turner more obviously faded out in the disintegration by the spectrum among the Impressionists —Corot a nook of atmospheric lyricism, edges rubbed with the sky—a more important effect of the force he represents and to which Delacroix bows, is to be seen in the movement which begins with Cézanne.

To this, however, also contributes the coarser feeling marked by Courbet: the arrival of the peasant in art. Instead of being satisfied to immolate his meagre personality in some great atelier (Courbet in Rubens' Antwerp would have been some contented Schneiders), the minor artist discovers self-assertion. *Bonjour M. Courbet!* What is the reply? "If Titian or Leonardo could pass through my studio, I'd go for them with my palette-knife." Resentment of force and beauty, that is the primitive.

Out of these two influences: the slightly failing aristocratic sensitivity of Delacroix and the complacent aggression of the peasant in Courbet: arrives Cézanne. He is still tormented by a feeling for the subtle generalization of grand form, carrying around in his pocket photos of the Rubens in the Louvre; but the crude generalizations of the primitive are mingled with this*—whence his pathetic cry, "The contour eludes me."

A sincere artist, he tried hard to make the synthesis of his perceptions, but failed. The result is worth analysing as the basis of all that is also sincerest in modern painting. The forms despairingly fall away from the centre Cézanne felt but could not define; in exasperation he tweaks them about all the more. The aerial complexity of Rubens is broken up into distinct planes, since the fluidity of power is evaporating. Colour, under the influence of the spectrum, becomes local in analysis, yet at the same time distributed in an effort to unify the planes in atmosphere and the forms in volume. Recession is abstracted from the synthesis of form, tone, and rhythm which define it in Titian and Rubens, and becomes a thing-in-itself: wanes of the winnowing fans in the creator's mind.

The next step is to separate the two modes which Cézanne sought to unify. Van Gogh and Gauguin seek to see form in its simplest basis—the former in terms of rhythm, pulsation, enveloping his forms in a rolling configuration like fumes of their own force (anticipated more comprehensively by Delacroix): the latter by taking the isolated form and reducing it to its maximum simplicity of mass. (I omit analysis of painters like Manet, Degas, Renoir, who are a running commentary on these tendencies, plus a greater interest in existence.)

Complacently continues the effort to elaborate small niches of the creative faculty. The primitive abstraction reaches bedrock in Gauguin. He thereupon becomes the source of a whole tribe of artists, chiefly sculptors, to whom primitivism is particularly pleasant on account of the intractability of their material. (Look at the skinny christs of Mestrovic; the fat lustfully Hindu girls of Eric Gill, his simian christ; the cleverly tubular nudes

* I would define this variation in the generalizing factor as (*a*) the smoothing out of mere idiosyncratic detail in terms of rhythmic concretion (Titian); (*b*) the emptying of all content from any accidental form in order to abstract design from it (Gauguin).

of Gaudier-Brezska ; the at times expressive, at times tormented, idiosyncratic forms of Epstein—Maillol alone using the formula as towards beauty.)

On the other side the effort to define movement suddenly kaleidoscoped into the Futurist—glib shallow creatures who knew their handbooks on physics, or at least had heard someone discussing the subject : thinly rebellious souls whose puritanism comes out in the coupling of the nude and adultery : hating everything that represents any value whatsoever. (Listen to Boccioni : " We exalt the clowns ! . . . Beethoven, Michelangelo, Dante revolt the stomach. Tristan and Isolde, Siegfried, Paolo and Francesca, Orpheus, Apollo, Christ, and Joan of Arc, Jupiter and Wotan . . . do you know what they excite in the Futurist ? The vomit ! ")

These roarers formulated the thesis that as we live amid forces and endure through time we must paint Force and Time.

The masterly union of tone and rhythm in, say, Rubens' Munich *Bacchanal* is not force to them because, having read about force in scientific books, they can only conceive it as graphs or diagrams, angles hitting one another. They do not see that the *Bacchanal* conquers time by catching energy up into a completed rhythm, so that our response to the work does not show us a group of static figures, but sends Silenus staggering into our own experience—the completion of Rubens' experience in the rhythm makes us also feel our whole life (now become drunkenness) moving into the experience of the picture and returning revitalized back into our own self-delighting.

No, to Marinetti, a picture consisting of one ear, an eyebrow, a matchbox, the façade the man looked at five minutes ago, and a beer-bottle label, joined together with spirals, would be a far truer synthesis of Dionysos.

Rubens, then, integrated in Beauty the spiritual significance of energy : the modern seeks to disintegrate its physical constituents.

Having now a static mode of volume and a static mode of flux and force, we advance to Cubism, which applies the method of the latter (cutting-up of forms) to the flat definition of the first.

This done, all that is left is *Blague :* Picasso's hodgepodge of geometry and minutiæ. Dada descends its spirals. Nirvana is noisily in sight.

(Commentary on the movement : Matisse, Braque, Derain, etc.—all the various stylistic and calligraphic efforts to define some oddment of the kaleidoscope of criss-crossing design and colour which is actuality : detached lines that seem to curl into the provocation of flesh : detached colour-effects of some concentrated perception : detached planes of some depilated landscape.)

All this movement, it is clear, is a downward current. What is behind it ? An effort to absorb into a unity, firstly, the complex perception of light's properties, secondly, a greater realism of forms and character, thirdly, the simple architectonic constructions of form itself.

The development since Picasso invoked the Philosophy of the

Ridiculous to cover his jejune foolery, has been, not an advance (for no advance was possible), but a fuddled effort to retrace the steps back to Cézanne and then to Delacroix. If plastic art is to become a serious expression again, it must be by adding a new complexity of colour and rhythm, with more idiosyncratic variation of form and greater stress on volume, to the æsthetic of Rubens.

(One man stands outside the movement, influenced lamentably by it, yet unable to control it: Rodin. Possessing profound plastic feeling he could not combine the character and force of his coarser work with the beauty of his lyrical gushes: those bodies flashing through veils of clouding light. Trying to synthesise Michelangelo and Praxiteles he only succeeded in bringing an irritation into the heart of his love.)

As evidence that the effort has begun to make the new synthesis I can only point to the work of one man, Lionel Ellis, a painting by whom is reproduced at the head of this article. This dignified and subtly constructed flesh was painted at the age of twenty-three.

(IX) Music, however, was the great achievement of the Revival. All that I postulated above as the necessary elements for a reborn art has already been made the basis of a musical æsthetic in Beethoven and Wagner.

Mozart infused the dormant forms of music with a complete relation to the human complex, though he did not carry out this relation into any generically definitive Form. That was left to Beethoven. The first full revelation of the intention of spirit on earth was made in his music. These symphonies bear one across the whole experience of an earth, at every point relating the individual experience to the generic symbol. The successive throes of conflict in the *3rd*, *5th* and *9th Symphonies* define the three great crises of the will: the domination of the external world of fate, victory in the inner world of destiny, and the culminating unification of the will in Beauty and Joy. Through these twine the freed experiences of emotion—of love in the *4th Symphony*, of debauch in the *7th* and *8th*. The *6th* states and stabilizes the world of perception.

Side by side with this in the sonatas and quartets is expressed the personal reactions from the necessity defined by these symbols of desire and joy—the suffering, the weariness, the reveries, the bitterness, the self-contempt, and self-renewal . . . anger always resolved on the note of unconquerable delight, which is robbed of any smug shallowness by the omnipresent anguish of scepticism, a self-mockery never permitted to become sterilizing.

The form is so compact that no critical pin can penetrate the decision of its tonal values; but its chief characteristic is the resilient energy of the *melos* which, though constructed of very simple units, gives the effect of infinite length and diversity, stepping from horizon to horizon, utterly free of space. Also the physical genesis and recoil of the image is always perfectly understood: human gesture and intonation are the basis of this *melos*, the Dionysian dance its mode.

Wagner is diametrically opposite in form. He builds always

by mass; drowning the earth with infinitely subtle and rich colour, he takes up the beautiful soaked masses and builds titanically out of them, draping them from star to star, but always returning to the clear contours of the hero or the heroine of kisses about whose nakedness he wraps this rich cloak. And this delicate huge modulation always proceeds from the human necessities of the theme: gesture and intonation rule here also.

Wagner adds an immense quantity of realistic properties, such being of little value to Beethoven's mænad purposes, but essential to the elucidation of Wagner's colour-masses, to save them from becoming abstract polyphony.

Beethoven defines the individual conquering an earth, love only introduced in so far as it affects will, debauch being a more central womb of imagery. Wagner defines basically the tragic and lyrical ecstasies of love, the conquering will returning always to love for its sanctification.

(X) Beethoven's music died away in the simple humanities of Schubert; Brahms' effort to achieve symphonic range by melodic elongation instead of rhythmic concentration; the thin palpitations of Verdi-like tunes.

Wagner, collecting the scattered efforts of Berlioz, Lizst, Weber, and even the mere sensationalists like Meyerbeer, constructed his vast yet simple glittering forests of heroism, his gardens gorgeous for love.

The results were immediate and far-reaching. First, the more obvious development by Strauss, trying to incorporate Wagner's methods in symphonic poems. Lacking Wagner's conceptual reach, Strauss could only string episodes together, trusting to generalised colour to unify. Realistic details become excrescences, programme. He is most happy when most limited by a hard and fast form and a trivial subject (*Till Eulenspiegel* in *rondo* form). We must, however allow him ingenuity in deliberate neuroticisms in the harmony of *Salome* and *Elektra*.

This side has more or less achieved a cul-de-sac of calculated uproar in Schönberg, mixing mysticism with untenable theories of harmony to explain what is only nervous bombast. *Pierre Lunaire*, however, caught a genuine condition of neurotic diablerie before Schönberg disappeared into the higher mathematics of pure discord.

The second development was the Russian (other national schools such as the Spanish are secondary). The first effect was the brilliant use of orchestral colour by Rimsky-Korsakov, actually the opposite of Wagner's use. Here colour-effects are disintegrated and enjoyed as separate things, not welded as in Wagner. (Hence modern colour-virtuosity and what cleverness jazz possesses.) Then among the more stolid nationalistic composers who were content to dilute conventional harmony and form with their folk-aspirations, boozily thrust the more native genius of Moussorgsky, influencing with the Gregorian modes the Western world through Debussy. Out of this school came Scriabin and Stravinsky.

Stravinsky is only a shrewd pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov. With more sense of weight than his master he effectively exploited

the Wagnerian colour and method of imagery in *L'Oiseau de Feu* and *Pétrouchka*. Reverting, however, amid the hysteria of the immediately pre-War period, to a more genuinely personal element, he wrote the *Sacre du Printemps*, which is the first large use of the Gauguin-generalization in music. Big forms drained of all vital content and held together only by the automatic pulse of the tom-tom—note the affiliations of primitivism and the " æsthetic " of machinery—both empty, dead, huge with repetitive noise : hell.

(In passing, I wish to emphasise that though it is generally seen how far Wagner's chromaticism has affected modern harmony, it is not seen how closely his adroitness in *Meistersingers* has affected the manipulation of musical imagery.)

The *Sacre* was Stravinsky's apotheosis, his sole reality. Since then he has merely kept on trying to be the musical counterpart of Picasso, etc. (Commentary : the *Sacre*, Prokoviev ; dada and realism, Les Six, chiefly Honneger.)

But Scriabin is deeply poisonous, for the reason that he springs from nearer the heart of Wagner's energies. Listen to the *Tristan* prelude and then to the *Poème d'Extase*, and you will see how the tragic exaltation of the first becomes the mewing agony and splintering pretence of power in the second. There is a deep sadistic compulsion about this man's music which is to be compared only to some of Michelangelo's forms. But as sadism is the feeblest possible form of sexual sensitivity, so is Scriabin the limit of musical excited impotence. (Note his early submission to Chopin, the musician of delicate onanisms.) His themes are mostly undistinguished till he flogs them over the extended sonata-form to which he clings. He repeats himself pointlessly, uses tricks such as shelving without inner necessity (again parodying Wagner)—the one unity is the sadistic excitation ; but its power to excite, by its creation of unrelieved nervous tension, should not be underestimated.

(XI) Music then has been enslaved by exactly the same forces as painting. Instead of grand form we find incoherent generalisation ; instead of unified detail we find clotted oddments of the splitting nerves. Certainly we see now in men like Bartok an effort to get back to emotional simplicity, but no central integration has yet occurred or is likely to occur. English musicians remain in a kind of post-Wagnerian backwash—Holst, etc.—Delius alone is original, his work possessing some of the finest qualities of our lyrical poetry ; but he is no core of reconstruction.

We see then that all the Lewisites shout as the horrible results of romanticism and sensualism (by which they mean the colour-image of Beauty) is true of music. But the fallacy in their argument lies in muddling a creative expression with its parasites. *Of course* Wagner's music upsets man's nervous sensibilities with the demands of its insatiable desire. So much the worse for man, not for the Beauty which destroys him. And if man turns on Wagner with hate and essays to build up a " classicism " of terror, so much more the worse for man. The greater the chance offered, the more fateful its Nemesis if you are too weak to take it. Personally, I welcome Scriabin in order that, by

overcoming my disgust for his turgid neuroses, I may deepen my love for the disciplined tumult of delighted love in Wagner.

For we see that music *did* achieve its end during this second episode of the Renaissance, and that, in doing so, it conditioned poetry and art so strongly that it swayed them off their feet. All that we can dream of as clarity of rhythmic outline: as joy willing and subduing a universe of inertia: is to be found in Beethoven. (He redefines Rubens and Shakespeare, and adds to them a new width of joy.) All that we can imagine of rich imagic detail is added in Wagner to the embrace of love conceived as grand rhythm. The universe shocked into action by Beethoven is lyrically solidified by love. At once here is exposed the skeletal basis of emotion, and here revealed the concretion of the perfected image.

Therefore instead of fleeing from the musical synthesis, like Lewis, T. S. Eliot, etc., we must endeavour to face it and absorb it: to evaluate the chaos of modern music by a synthesis combining Beethoven's rapid ease of construction and Wagner's rich sincerity of image: and finally to use this synthesis to bring back poetry and art into the dimension of grand form.

(XII) Poetry, after the failure of Keats and Byron to complete their expressions, wandered off into the Spasmodics who hoarsened into Browning, and the Mellifluous who trilled into Tennyson: the pre-Raphælites a half-way house.

The new birth began with Francis Thompson: a recrudescence of Beddoes' imagic splendour, thinned out in human content, but alembicated in form, abstractly Dionysian. At the same time the human cry returned with A. E. Housman, very limited in emotion, but technically purified.

Out of these two trains came the Georgians. From Thompson came Drinkwater, an intellectual enfeebling; Flecker, who gulped down an indigestible mass of colour which he tried in vain to discipline with Parnassian theory, though his instinct was right; Lascelles Abercrombie, by far the most vital, who made a desperate effort to force Thompson's best—a lushy precision—into the action of the human universal. *Emblems of Love* is a very fine failure; but Abercrombie has never since failed so richly. He went partly adrift in an effort to include the peasant consciousness, probably owing to study of Hardy. However, *The End of the World* showed a new coherence which was amply carried out in the delicious comedy *Phœnix*. This was loudly attacked by the moral lions like J. C. Squire, and Abercrombie timidly withdrew into silence, exposing what one feels to be the chief deterrent to a far higher achievement: a cautiousness both in poetic and critical statement at the wrong places. He is unsure of himself; even writes nonsense like *Ham and Eggs* in weak efforts to get contact with the *zeitgeist*, instead of doing so by recklessly following his desire.

From Housman leads the Georgian lyrical trail, which achieves a minor perfection in Walter de la Mare and W. H. Davies: a loneliness of wondering fear weeps into bright flowers of mystery in one—a minute felicity of delight informs the pastoral fantasy of the other. Rupert Brooke breaks in

with an adolescent fervour of sentimental disillusion: the first point of the later self-consciousness which suddenly clots into the Sitwells. This self-consciousness comes from the continental art-movements: the dry symbology of Mallarmé, the *vers librists*, the hypochondriacal humours of Laforgue.

(XIII) But wherever the self-consciousness came from, the imagery of the Sitwells is definitely English: an agitation, disintegration, and development of the lineal colour-image of Keats-Beddoes-Thompson. The disintegrated side appears in the stress on purely nervous sensitivity, the positive side in the new thick fluid sensuousness of imagery. Although a certain amount of nonsense was thrown off in the exasperation of battle, a core of valuable imagery remains, definitely influencing any possible future reintegration. More—in Sacheverell, a field of lyrical nuances, of pastoral-sweet rhythm, is opened.

> And gods walked in the harvest, or among the grapes,
> To choose a mirror of themselves in men;
> They tired of immortal love and stole into the harvest
> Hidden in wind's raiment, or at a tower of stone
> Fell in a gold shower like sun with rain;
> Such were the loves of gods who schemed in green barley.

Only two men have made any development on this: W. J. Turner and Roy Campbell. Both have sought to employ the new thickness and quickness of the image to define a belief in life. Both stand outside the silly classical-versus-romantic fight, realising that the spangled senses can claim as clear a shape as any denuded intellectualism, and that the present problem is to discipline the senses, not to obliterate them. The result at its best is a new sharp excitement which uses all the dark storminess of "romanticism" to get at some closer kernel of imagery, and which packs as much colour as possible within the phrase while preserving the integrity of the intellectual statement and the curve of emotion.

> The hanging Land
> Crowded with Trees upblown,
> A darkness sown
> In sprouting stone
> Whence waves her small white hand!

In Campbell's *Flaming Terrapin*, a swaggering fantasia, this method is used to define the birth of an earth. Let us hope this picture is prophetic of the effort into which poetry is about to build:

> Gigantic flowers, exploding from the sand,
> Spread fans of blinding colour all around.

Here, I say, stands poetry—with *Phœnix*, *The Flaming Terrapin*, and the best lyrics of Sacheverell Sitwell and W. J. Turner.

(XIV) Two older men must not be forgotten: W. B. Yeats and Gordon Bottomley. The first has long since outdistanced his early Celtic twilight. From Ezra Pound he learned economy of statement and has developed a sinewy but melodious form of lyric. Moreover, in his best plays he has invented a feminine

but delicately profound use of symbolism continuously relating itself back to human experience.

Bottomley, developing the stark human intonation which makes Morris's *Defence of Guinevere* so taut with emotional significance, has created a tragic expression which, although evading the larger tangled themes of passion, yet suggests passionate intensification of drama and a force of gesture hidden under clenched surfaces.

(XV) So far so good. But there is another school of verse, almost completely American in origin, which is doing its best to sterilise this effort of English poetry to reknit its thews. The chief exponent is T. S. Eliot, though other Americans such as Gertrude Stein and Laura Riding * exhibit modifications of the attitude, and there are few writers it has not tainted.

This school stands opposed to all lyrical integrations. Convinced that life is futile, it wishes to reduce all beliefs and methods to a common intellectual Nirvana of tin. T. S. Eliot is a well-read man who prides himself on his scholarly sense of values. In fact, he is the most partial of insensitive critics, insensitive to every element of the delighted music of the senses, partial to every element which tends to a barren intellectuality. Typical of his criticism is this: "The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates."

What could be more destructive, less sensitive? Eliot of course would assert that thus we discipline our emotions and senses. I have not space here to defend the lyrical basis of all true creativeness; but enough has been said in passing to show how I would make that defence. Not by perfecting an intellectual instrument and then mechanically applying it to the material; but by developing a sensitised instrument through a persistent effort to approximate the intellectual and emotional centres of self—that, I say, is how the creator works.

(XVI) Indeed we see in all these people a lassitude of the will. Life is dull and drab, purpose has fled. Nothing but the Waste Land remains. They thereupon proceed to blame life as if it could bestow upon them some ready-made intention like a tram ticket to Parnassus. Life is muddled, so we must express muddle. Life is nothing but jazz and machinery, so we must produce a pastiche of lurching rhythms and angular forms. Life is a continuous present, so let us seesaw upon the repetition of its inconsequence.

That there is such a thing as the creative will of a Beethoven is apparently not known. Is it modesty? or merely blankness? and, in any case, why should such people meddle with poetry? †

(XVII) One man of at least far bulkier stature buttresses this dull synthesis of despair: James Joyce—though an occasional

* Here indeed an attempt is made to reformulate poetry as a humanity! This in the name of an abstract method which cuts it off from any hope of the essential human contacts. As if humanity can exist as a psychological abstraction!—as well be a Robot and have done with the idiotic contradictions of an æsthetic.

† To be fair, I must admit that the general attitude among young American writers, i.e. *transition*, expresses a more vital curiosity, a greater sense of poetry as something to be lived, than is to be found in England. Even the passion with which they submit to the experimentalists shows this.

vividly precise phrase redeems him from the dullness of the pure Intellectualists. A depressed Irishman, a very fine realist of minutiæ—in one vast neurotic upheaval he vomited up all the spattering material of an existence on earth. Not that the plentiful lavatory epigraphs thrown up define a condition of frank self-revelation. As has been written elsewhere: "Joyce the Irishman is not an emancipated intellect, repudiating all smug evasions by a rampant indulgence in licentious speech. He is that cramped and fettered thing, the automaton of evasion itself. Centuries of suppression alone can produce these revulsions in asceticism. This modern journalist is only one of the Holy Fathers returned to earth, still bent on vilifying all that is gay and upright in love, still making the human body the symbol of decay and death." (*Norman Lindsay.*)

He is therefore the utter antithesis to Rabelais, who binds together all the excreta of experience in one tremendous rhythm of overpowering laughter. Joyce, intellectually revolted by the necessities of life, pours out every little contact of horror, pain, and filth, as if he hopes to empty his life that way, to scrape the last touch of flesh from his contaminated mind.

Having thus discarded all the larger unifying factors of experience and delved into the slushy material of his subconscious memory, all that is left for him is pure sport with the formal elements of the word; and he is now playing a ponderous game with the dictionary, laboriously chopping up the language, getting amusement out of tiny interrelations and divisions of the rudderless consciousness.

> "And an odd time she'd cook him up blooms of fisk and lay to his heartsfoot her meddery eygs and staynish beacons on toasc and a cupenhave so weeshwashy of Greenland's tay or mokau to order or Si-kiang or his ale of ferns in trueart pewter. . . ."

As part of this game with formal elements, the *reductio ad absurdum* of all abstract use of verbal structure, stands Gertrude Stein. One can only wonder that a person could go on producing her childish patterns of stammering jigsaws without being bored to death. Her work represents the ultimate aphasia of the constructive faculty.

To return: two Americans responsible for much of this are Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings. Pound is a literary amateur whose general culture and lack of conviction make him a hodge-podge of anything from Kiplingesque ballads to Provençal poetry. He now turns out an indefatigable epic of cantos alternating Imagist "charm" and "modern" irrelevancies. Cummings shows the end of *vers libre* (Whitman-via-Sandberg-and-Imagist-miniatures) dwindling into snatches of zigzag impressionism under the excuse of "psychology":

> yellowandbluish cat (perched why
> curvingly at this) window, yes
> women sturdily meander in my
> mind, woven by always upon
> sunset,
> crickets within me whisper.

These then seem to me to be the enemy if we are to integrate poetry.* As in music and painting, the limit has been reached. It is impossible to continue to abstract the faculty of expression from the concrete humanity it should express. We must therefore pick up the musical concentration of the senses in the Keats-Beddoes-Thompson nexus of imagery and seek to relate it to the generic Shakespearean achievement of the past.

(XVIII) The attitude defined by Lewis and Eliot is not, however, original. It is dictated from France. There we find, firstly, a schismatic group, the *Surréalistes*, a romantic survival of dada, attempting to make a subjective philosophy out of that expletive Nirvana. Secondly, there is the neo-Catholic group. Tired out with flippancy, these busy people have turned to the Church as the Rock of Ages against which the Bergsonian waves foam in vain. Stability at all costs is the cry, and what more stable than Rome! Morever, the neo-Thomist movement in philosophy suits our need for sterile rest. Centre of this is Maritain, propounding a theory of pure living and brittle poetry in which the clear tones of young boys' voices play an anomalous part. Cocteau, reclaimed (with a wink), writes *Orphée*, ending with a prayer for wholesome family life; and so on.

The most important part of this morality of Purity (only an expression of disgust for Wagnerian passion) is that it necessitates an æsthetic of pure intellectualised form—i.e. classicism.

(XIX) Typical of the muddled ideology and ratiocination of these people is the following logic of Lewis in the *Paleface*. There he unfolds the usual thesis of the Defence of the West. Properly understood, this is a very much needed defence. Although I do not think Eastern or primitive arts have actually created the lapse into abstraction I have detailed, they have certainly fitted in too well with our declining consciousness not to have been eagerly absorbed.

Here in the *Paleface* attacking D. H. Lawrence, Lewis quotes him applaudingly to the effect that our consciousness and that of the East are death to one another. This is only too true. Let us see how Lewis applies it, remembering his own definition of a sentimentalist as a man who fails to carry his ideas to their logical conclusion:

> "With European art *the structure*, the geometric basis of beauty, has always tended to be covered up, hidden away (and so lost very often), more than is the case with the great æsthetic systems of the East. The Hellenic naturalism, the result of the Greek scientific bias, has, as I see it, resulted in Europe in an art which, except in the case of a few individuals of very great genius, been so inferior to the art of China, for instance, that it could almost be said that the European had never understood the secrets of the pure eye at all."

Now what is the indisputably unique achievement of the

* For example, the most promising young lyrist, Robert Graves, instead of purging a tendency to prettiness by persisting till it turned to emotional strength, has succumbed to the temptations of the "Intellect." His fate, however, shows what a present evil the Apostles of Abstract Psychology are.

Western plastic consciousness? Not Byzantine or Gothic art, not Botticelli or the Primitives—those we can pair off elsewhere. But where can we find another Praxiteles, Rubens, Titian, or Turner? Like them or not, they are our peculiar contribution to mind, and to affirm the Western consciousness is to affirm this fluid solidity which, using three-dimensional form, transfigures it with rhythm of light.

What right has Lewis then to talk of the West? None. No more has Massis or Maritain. They are all merely defenders of a barren metaphysical system of the Catholic Church, and of the intellectual abstraction which is just as Chinese as European —which is, in fact, a negative condition present wherever mind exists at all and which only appears vital when shocked into strenuousness by the opposing principle of human integration. That is why the Egyptian or Chinese artist can go on repeating himself indefinitely for centuries with only slight formal variations. For it is some such intellectual inertia which must result from the application of pure intellectuality to the creative act (*cf.* Eliot, Sect. XV).

Lewis tries awkwardly to escape this logic by pleading that you can imitate the forms of an insect without becoming an insect. But art is consciousness not an insect; and to hand yourself over to Chinese art in these terms is to become Chinese.

What was Lewis's definition of a sentimentalist?

(XX) Another propagandist, though opposed to the puritans of the intellect, is D. H. Lawrence. He is of the brood of Scriabin, and states clearly enough the case for torment: the itch to get back to the night of the unconscious, the primal plasm of instinct, the dark pit of the blood. Lewis roars loudly over Lawrence, though actually they are twins.

We have seen everywhere that as the strain becomes too great the spirit breaks up into its component parts—one part perishing. On the one hand the chaos of the senses, on the other the dead geometry of the intellect. Therefore to seek to build one's cosmos on either of these foundations is equally to define the division of the spirit.

All that we must carefully perceive is that this dark yearning back into the bubbling swamp of the flesh is *not* the Wagnerian deification of desire. Lawrence hates desire of that kind—just as Lewis or Eliot does. He wants the loss of identity, not its hellenised godhead. He wants to ooze back into the mud, masochistically surrendering to the brutal embrace of death, not to shape Praxitelean statues from his poised delight.

The lyrical embraces of *Tristan*, which burn always upon a consciousness of sculptural beauty, are the antithesis of Lawrence's blundering primitive contacts, efforts to smudge self out in the blind jungle of matted bodies. The literary ancestry of his analysis is Whitman's narcism and Russian masochism (*cf.* Dostoievsky and Bunin); but to the latter Lawrence adds a thick obstruction of perverted poetic imagery—the result of absorbing the Western musical energies—the image of beauty flowing *down* out of the blood into cavernous loins.

(There is no doubt that Bergson's Intuitonism has helped to

give a good conscience to the effort to establish these primitive contacts. *Cf. Les Unanistes* for the social definition.)

(XXI) LAWRENCE's praise of the lust for the maternal womb of the unconscious has naturally been related to Freud's clinical analysis of that lust; but, except that both relate to the clinic, there is little real resemblance. I am not speaking of the imbeciles collected under the title of psycho-analysts, but of Freud himself, whose human balance is marvellously kept despite the madhouse of his material.

Certainly Freud has exposed the mechanism of repression, the point at which certain emotional contacts are established between actuality and the secret self, but that does not mean that he claims to expose the whole of that secrecy.

The fallacy here, which is repeated so often by modernists, is to think that to register dispersed attention is to penetrate to the mysterious depths of self—(*cf. Ulysses*, etc.). Where in the mind, for instance, is the constructive faculty shown in the Beethoven *melos?* Will any clinical æsthetic produce *that* by grubbing among the submerged rubbish-heaps of memory?

The creative mind can only know itself creatively. That simplicity is the truth evaded by T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence equally. One seeks a neat escape into the parlours of "intellect," the other riotously burrows into the mud of the "unconscious"—but both seek a ready-made approach to creativeness: a formula for life and art, an escape.

Certainly, from Freud the creator will get a new awareness of his own impulses, but not a new spiritual instrument; and Freud would be the last person to countenance such misunderstandings of his analysis.

We have seen the same impasse occur over Physics. Instead of being content to absorb scientific or philosophical hypotheses into the mind's unity so that they will effect a subtle reorientation of that unity, the modern way is to seek at once to apply the hypotheses abstractly as an æsthetic method.

(XXII) I HAVE left little space for the novel or social thought; but that does not matter much, as the centres of consciousness are not those which make the most noise, but those which achieve the most concentrated form.

The Flaubertian era, quenching the Balzacian lyricism of sex, spread out from France to England where it further quenched the Dickensian poetic fantasy of character. Realism settled down, self-consciously in George Moore (since reborn as a Balzacian), grimly in Gissing, portentously in Thomas Hardy (who possesses, outside the movements, a popular niche for his minutely careful pictures of England in prose and verse); but all this contributed very little to the future.

Conrad, on the other hand, introduced a new world of action and thought. In this lies his greatness, rather than in the belauded "atmosphere" or the tediously frittered talent of *Chance*. What right had such a master of the nervous complexities of tightening drama to accept fame for such a work? For at his best he creates the rambling tension of the Russians (Dostoievsky) plus a dramatic resolution which allies the work

to the heroic tragedies. His achievement will yet bear much fruit, both in prose and drama.*

The worst obstructive mind of the decade is Bernard Shaw. He has attached himself to all the most lively expressions about him and managed to devitalize and vulgarize them all, even Nietzsche. *The Perfect Wagnerite*, for instance, is not merely an impertinence, it is the falsest book ever written about a great æsthetic integration. Shaw has no sense of character or drama, but a vast virtuosity in picking up themes of contemporary interest and setting them out with a pert staginess. Primarily, as cause of his own complacence and that of his readers, we may note his sexual negativity: the preposterous innocence with which he tries to apply the abstract biological law of women-chasing-man to the facts of existence. For all his pretence to the sceptical dignity of ideas, he is only an entrepreneur of talent. His baseness is manifest in his hatred of Shakespeare and Byron, his praise of Bunyan. Although he assumes the innocence of a pose here also, the genuine puritanical malignancy comes out in such remarks as that Antonys and Cleopatras can be found in any ginshop. If he had remained in the aldermanic area of mind (making fun of doctors and the Salvation Army) he would have been valuable.

Butler, whom Shaw plundered, wrote one great work of irony, *The Way of all Flesh;* and though the relentless attack on the family, and so on all social repression, has no profoundly affirmative background, it does point the way out of the maze of realistic depression in the novel. The hint was not taken, however, till Norman Douglas wrote *South Wind*, a great achievement, possessing the completion of a carefully ratiocinated metaphysic and yet human with a ruthless amiability.

Since then little has been done. It seemed for a while that Aldous Huxley would pick up the trail, amalgamating the satirical pinpricking of writers like Stella Benson with Douglas's hardy intellect. For the rest, there is the horde of females with appallingly efficient transcript of this and that social side-section, and a few experimentalists still pegging away with stuttering atmospherics.

(In America, Dreiser still carries on "realism," though redeemed by a naïve force, and Hergesheimer at times gets a suaver version of the Conradian tense tangles of will. The others are still wrestling with Lawrence and *Ulysses*.)

(XXIII) No one has had the power to proclaim an æsthetic, save of the cliques. Croce is too aloof and academic. Clive Bell invented the phrase Significant Form as vindication of the Cézanne-generalisation—a phrase since used indiscriminately. Roger Fry has worked out a pretty scheme of the static formal elements of art, which he appears to imagine constitute the reality of the creative act. Caught in the returning tide he now adds

* Proust, with his glancing and impalpably self-disorganising contacts, shows the expiring edge of this method. *Cf.* him with a writer like Paul Morand, at his best swiftly constructive.—Proust, introducing *Tendres Stocks*, objects to an image attached to a boiling kettle, saying that it is only heat at such a degree, etc.—thus exposing the feebleness of his mind to which reality is an interminable chemical formula.

"psychological volume" to the ingredients. The bastard scientific nature of that phrase gives away the whole artificial precision of this type of criticism.

Needless to say, most of the jargon comes from France. Cocteau was prolific in producing comfortingly false aphorisms such as that a "masterpiece finishes, not begins, an epoch"—or criticism as peculiarly inept as his statement that Bach goes straight ahead with what he has to say, but Beethoven merely keeps on repeating himself. Now we have classical purity and Paul Valéry, who deserves a better fate.

W. B. Yeats' *A Vision*, the only truly profound contribution to thought since Nietzsche, has passed almost unnoticed. It defines the complex interrelation of spiritual symbols in the human act.

In England, W. J. Turner alone has defined an intelligent æsthetic, realising the structural centres of life which the creative ecstasy sets spinning. It is unfortunate he shares the vulgar depreciation of Wagner (though every now and then yielding him extorted tribute), since he is one of the few who, in work, can face the Wagnerian cosmos.

The drama flounders in Expressionistic devices, which are only disrupted realism jarred into what is hoped to be significance by some intellectual symbology. But the real problem here, as in other modes, is to submerge the symbol in the material, not *vice versa*. Rhythmic concentration alone can redeem work truly from the thinness of mere realistic representation.

Ibsen, Wedekind and Strindberg were the forerunners here; and though they avoided the worst faults of the pure propagandist (Brieux), of mere abstract staginess (Shaw), or constructional disintegration (Expressionists)—yet they did not arrive at the poetic balance of idea and character; they missed it by alternating from too trivially realistic to too obviously intellectual an angle.

(XXIV) We stand then at the gates with Nietzsche, Beethoven and Wagner as the signposts of our future . . . themselves our future, if we are to have one.

These three minds have, since the revival of consciousness with Blake, alone mastered the concrete universal. They alone have not crippled themselves by attention to side-issues, by casual modes of a limited creativeness. Their spirits blaze a clear trail of self-sufficient energy, sucking amorously at life, yet always saving intact the integral flame of desire.

Around their achievement fluctuate all the others. We see first of all the various Romantic Movements: that is, efforts by weak spirits to grapple with the reality of music. Failing, they flee into some corner of magical escape. Stronger minds, like Delacroix, Balzac, Goya, Rodin, get face to face with life, but fail to achieve in their lives the full continuity of delighted energy.

Beethoven marches straight over the corpses of all Romantic escapes and Classical purities, into the heart of his own self. Does he dream of an impossible beauty, a quivering and tender sweetness, a heaven of the blossoming senses—then he dreams, and be damned to all definitions of Romanticism which think to snare his dream.

Does his will demand to wrestle with the sharpest of actualized conflicts, to meditate gravely among his scepticisms—then he wrestles or meditates, and be damned to all theories of intellectual dichotomy.

In Beethoven and Wagner is defined a complete submission to the sensual essences, *plus* a clear strength which never slackens a sinew as it bears the dual symbols of energy upon its back.

This Dionysian courage is analytically proclaimed by Nietzsche. He ends the reign of Music and opens the stage for an absorption of the musical energies into poetry and plastic art. That is our task and our reward.

All the uproar, the schisms, the trivial *cul-de-sacs*, were, first of all, the effect of the unleashed musical energies upon the intellectual consciousness of man; secondly, the spasm as life draws back upon its haunches after the attack of the great trinity.

All these schisms were necessary that we should have laid bare before us all the hidden chambers of mind—that in this morgue of art we might see exposed the anatomy of the æsthetic faculty. These trivial vortices of self-consciousness were needed first to aid us to spread the Dionysian consciousness over all our activities and create the new synthesis.

Thus, out of this new encounter of energy with primitivism arises the new dramatic tension I spoke of with regard to Conrad. A fresh conflict is posited—not the Shakespearean wrecking of self on an insufficiency or blindness of the will, but the tragic division of self (hinted at by Ibsen, etc.)—the effort to arrive at consciousness of oneself, to attain an intellectual awareness of one's impulses.

(XXV) Yeats, drawing on I know not what astrological mysteries, prophesied some years back that the turning-point, the arrival of the third kingdom of the spirit, was to occur in 1928.

The signs of the Third Kingdom are a liberation of irrational Dionysian force and, simultaneously, a strengthening of the antithetical symbols of the intellect.

We have seen, under the stress of Music's conquest of Time, all expressions wearing through their old garments till, growing more and more skeletal, they became inert. That was in order that we might have as clear a sense as possible of our tools.

We have seen, side by side with this, the storm of nervous sensibility tear minds to rags or send them seeking refuge in the hot primitive mud. That was to make clear for us the dramatic potentialities of the struggle into self-consciousness.

It now remains for us to make this effort, legionaries of the new Roman determination to stabilize spirit—defining a new faith in life and the eternality of self, and at the same time washing our hands, Pilate-fashion, in the coolest of ironical despairs.

It remains for the Third Kingdom—ignoring the efforts to return to the primitive slime or to make life a psychological abstraction—to define this freedom of self-motive energy, deepening from consciousness to consciousness, and, with the imageries of all the modes whereby the human spirit redeems itself from death, constructing the fluid concretions of its love.

I proclaim the Third Kingdom.

MUSIC

by KENNETH SLESSOR

I

Music, on the air's edge, rides alone,
Plumed like empastured Cæsars of the sky
With a god's helmet; now in the gold dye
Of sunlight, the iron cloak, the Tuscan stone
Melts to enchanted flesh—a voice is blown
Down from the windy pit, like a star falling.
Men think it is a lost eagle calling,
But the fool and the lover know it for Music's cry.

He is running with the Valkyrs on a road of manes,
Darkness draws back its fur, the stars course by,
Fighting the windy beak of hurricanes
To keep their station in the sky—
Away, away! The little earth-light wanes,
The moon has drowned herself, cold music rings,
The battering of a thousand Vulcanals
Hammers the blood; a thousand horsemen fly
Belly to air, away! Now music sings
Harshly, like horns of Tartars blown on high.

II

A ship in hell marooned;
He lies under the mast,
Caked with the sticky unguents of the sun.
Sluggishly at his wound,
The rat Pain, biting with bloody teeth
And broken nails, is fed at last,
The tale is done.
Let the shell of bleeding flesh remain,
This crusted finery is nothing worth.
He flings his body carelessly to Pain,
Meat for the earth.
Trumpets of godhood! The voice of Music sings,
Lost in the dark forest, riding out,
Louder and nearer, with triumphant wings,
Music and his eternal cavaliers—
Now Tristan rises with a mighty shout.
Nobody hears.

III

O silent night, dark beach,
Drowning like lovers, each in each,
Uncharge thy musky boughs, unbend
Thy mouths of air, and give them speech—

Then, like a nest of thieves,
The golden, tattling leaves
Will sell their mask for bravoes' love,
Or cry their fruit to stranger Eves,

And voices ride
By foam and field
Of drowsy lovers, lips unsealed,
Blown to the lazy tide—

With love we put the planets out,
With kissing drowned the bells,
And struck the clambering moons to ice;
Now we shall sleep and hide . . .'

I sang with Nonie, side by side,
Sunk in a drift of tumbled laces,
Till Music breathed his enormous flute
Over our small, upturned faces.

IV

Torches and running fire; the flagstones drip
Like a black mirror, wet from killing. Smoke goes up,
Clouding the gilded rafter-birds, and the flying cup
That floats with magic wine to Kolchak's lip.

Then the Khan claps his beard, and harps are brushed
Clear in the darkness; dancers' bells far off
Blab at their ankles. Now, from the gold trough,
We have dipped bowls of mare's milk; all is hushed.

Suddenly, dull bubbling drums uprise, grow thicker,
Split with a scream of metal—glazed in the flare,
Tartar girls rapidly whirl in storms of animal hair,
Spinning in islands of movement, quicker and quicker.

In the middle of the dance, smiling at his whim,
Khan Kolchak rose, and left the golden hall.
Soon there was silent darkness over all.
One of the dancers was sent after him.

V

Open! It is the moon knocking with fists of air
To break thy doors down, it is the lusty moon
More clamorous than hunting-cries, come tramping
With lanterns to uprouse thee, drown the fields
In drifts of crystal, waken the farms with light,
And lovers call to buffet the rough smoke
From valleys rising up—then, like the juice
Of June's apples, the rich, Indian glow
Shall cast them out of Time, and all be running,
Dancing and kissing, in this headlong, breathless moon,
This moon pulling at old hinges, bawling through keyholes,
Crying out 'Siegmund! Siegmund! Siegmund!'
The door flies open.

In this house, there is anger, in the forest, night,
But love is under my laughter, and under my cloak, flight.
O, hast thou not yet woken?
In night, there is bitterness, in sorrow, tears to weep,
But love is under my music, and under my cloak, sleep.
O, Lady, hast thou spoken?
In tears, there is remembering, in memory, no release,
But love is under my kissing, and under my cloak, peace.
O, hide beneath my cloak!

So shall we steal into the deeps of Spring,
Clasped each to each, and swim the merry tide,
Rounding the world, on the green floods astride,
Till, drowned in a bubble of flowers, too dazed to cling,
We're thrown up, pink and naked castaways,
On some old beach, where Time is put to rout,
And the world a buried star, not talked about—
So shall we daunt the gods, conceal their gaze.

VI

Once, at your words, I would have struck to flame
The ground I strode on, all the hives of blood
Gone bursting mad—but now, congealed and thick,
Anger, the wine, chokes me, hoods me with stone,
Clogs and corrodes me with its marish flood.
Suddenly, as though to metal grown,
I stand immovable, feel strangely sick,
And hear your voice far off, crying my name.

The clouds dissolve. Now I can see your face,
Immense and sweating; the room has fallen in,
Tiny beside it—your face, immense and sweating,
Blurred into mockery at the words that fill you.
Come, then. You wish to crush me. Let us begin;
Since it is obvious I shall have to kill you,
Have done with useless voices and regretting.
I want to get it over, and leave this place.

Then, like some god on a stone pedestal
Who stirs by night with unfamiliar limbs,
I turn to an automaton, upraise
Half-wondering, an arm I find in the air,
Clammy with grappled iron. Everything swims,
Fogged in the coughing gaslight. Blindly I stare,
And stab once or twice . . . stabbing in a daze . . .
No need for more. He is dead, this animal.

Dead, dead. There was no need to strike
So many times, there is no need to hide—
It's nothing to be ashamed of nowadays.
He was my enemy. Now he has perished,
Charred in the smoking ovens of my pride.
Why should the splendid fury that I cherished
Seem now to be a cold and fruitless blaze?
Good God! Can't I kill my enemy if I like!

VII

Nothing grows on the stone trees
But lanterns, frosty gourds of colour,
Melting their bloody drops in water
Over the dark seas.

These peaks of stucco, smoking light,
These Venice-roads, the pools and channels,
Tunnel the night with a thousand planets,
Daubing their glaze of white,

Where belfries glitter, spire on spire,
Shining on men with paper faces,
And boats, in the glass billow fading,
Beetles of cloudy fire.

Faintly the dripping crystal strings
Unlock their Spanish airs, their festival,
Which, far away, resolves to emptiness,
Echoes of bitter things,

Far away music, cold and small,
Which, like a child's delight remembered,
Falls to mocked effigy for ever,
Melancholy to recall.

VIII

Come in your painted coaches, friends of mine,
We'll keep the stars night-company with wine,
Morning shall find us bending at the flute,
And daybreak mock us at our candleshine.

Pile all thy jewelled berries in a heap,
Almonds and musk and sweetmeats, all for thee—
We'll rest on silk a thousand cushions deep,
Wake up and shake the cassia-tree,
And eat a sticky cake, and sleep,
And slee—— . . .

IX

Look up! Thou hast a shining Guest
Whose body in the dews hath lain,
His face, like a strange wafer presst
Secret and starry, at thy pane;
And he shall sing with human tongue
Old music men have never sung
Since Orpheus on earth was young,
And shall not sing again.

But life and all its lies of stone
Shall crack to fumes and disappear,
Thy little golden shells be blown
Like stars in water, far and near,
And thou shalt wake behind the Glass,
In stone dissolved, and phantom brass——
O, deaf! the bells of Music pass,
Not can, but darest, thou hear!

VARIATION

ON A WELL-KNOWN THEME

by ROBERT NICHOLS

Along the wall-top of Toledo,
  Black on the sunset's awful flame,
There paced one gaunt, one portly shadow—
  Don Juan with Canon Whatshisname.

The good priest, mindful of his duty,
  Discoursed, twixt pinch and pinch of snuff,
On *Sin* and, via the sunset's beauty,
  Steered course to treat, with sighs, of love.

He enlarged on the vanity of kisses,
  On Death's corruption sure if slow;
Declared how vile all earthly bliss is,
  How sure is chastisement below.

He dwelled (at length) on life's illusion,
  Observed how sick and sorry are
The godless ("note the sad confusion
  Of this age in particular!")

This much and more. Don Juan pondered
  Then, towering like a water-spout
Into whose path a barge has blundered,
  With a Vesuvian roar burst out:—

"Still man creates to gloom or glory
  The God that is his guide or fate,
And fated we who, sick and sorry,
  No God creative can create.

Leave this dull age its dead to bury,
  Our time stands at its period,
Out of my joy, my pride, my fury
  I will create a grander god.

Sweet signs shall mark his hitherward drawing,
  A rosy dawn-star brighten earth,
Asses—of all kinds—cease hee-hawing,
  And spring renew scent, blossoms, mirth.

He shall come forth immense and dripping
  From rolling in the Hesperian brine,
Who all night long had wandered stripping
  The starry grapes from heaven's vine.

He shall come forth brown, more gigantic
Than Burgos' pile, th'Escurial's shade,
His laughter gustier than th'Atlantic,
His voice outrattling heav'n's cannonade!

"My blessings on all earthly creatures!
Much good and ill may them befall,
Much blessing! My blessing on those natures
Where act weds courage, most of all!

Their bride-bed be the Fury's chasm,
Their kisses fierce with flame and din,
The fruitage of that joyful spasm
A race shall make the thyrsos spin!"

My god shall dance before his people
Shall stamp till pews—and pulpits!—rock,
Bells boom in every earthly steeple,
The seven seas buffet shock with shock.

The righteous poor-in-heart shall flee him
On long legs with yet longer face,
But we shall dance to see him, see him,
And burst our guts out in his praise:

"Allelujah! Rah! Hi-cock-o-lorum!
Gloria! Elohim! Yoicks! Evoi!
The moon his Jane, the sun his jorum!
Thou shalt enjoy! Thou shalt enjoy!

—The canon groaned. Before they parted
He spoke of Jacob, of souls pawned
For too red pottage, of heaven thwarted . . .
Eye on a miss, Don Juan yawned.

The canon, Rome says, reached heaven a bishop.
The Don, all know, yet fries in hell.
An ancient story. Why, pray, dish up
A tale too many know so well?

Only this—where is Night's dome scribbled
With his Right Reverend Grace's name?
Search!—See DON JUAN'S dances ribald
Cyphered in hell's eternal flame.

PATSA

Or the Belly of Gold

by LIAM O'FLAHERTY

There lived in our district an old man called Patsa. He had no doubt been one time young and innocent, but within my memory he had always been aged, wrinkled and a great scoundrel. He embodied within his stinking carcass all the vices and perversions which our ancient community has accumulated through the centuries. For that reason he was greatly feared and respected. He was also a by-word.

He was a tall, lean man, with a solitary yellow tooth in his upper jaw. That tooth was famous and people said when anything was stolen: "Patsa saw it with his wagging tooth." For Patsa, being exceedingly cunning, always affected the grin of an idiot, holding his mouth open, showing his naked gums and flicking his tongue against the solitary tooth, which moved hither and thither like a snake's fang.

His eyes were green and small. He had enormous white eyebrows that almost concealed his eyes. His hair had once been white, but it became, later, a dirty yellow colour through lack of moisture. Patsa's body became too mean to feed its own hair, since Patsa was too mean to feed his body. The skin on his face was also yellow and there was no flesh between it and the bone. His ears were black with dirt and they had as many wrinkles in them as the belly of an aged sow. They were the main cause of the unpleasant odour which Patsa always carried about with him. A chancre had eaten away the top of his nose, leaving a stub which could not possibly be of any use for smelling. The wits of our district said that the nose became diseased through smelling Patsa.

He used to wear a blue tam-o'-shanter cap, a yellow woollen muffler, rawhide shoes and a suit of white frieze. His clothes were generally covered with spots of red ashes and with other unseemly excrements. He made no sound when he walked. He always walked very erect with his hands in his waistcoat pockets. Whenever anybody spoke to him, he stared like a fool for a long time, wagging his tooth. Then, if he had nothing to gain by talking, he said "Hi" and walked away. If he had anything to gain by talking, he began: "Well! By the Cross of Christ! May the swine fever devour me if there is a word of a lie in what I am going to say." He never spoke the truth.

He had no shame in him. Although he had no land and no trade that is considered honourable, he would not fish but begged of the fisherman, who gave unto him in order to drive away his smell. He earned money from strangers and by performing unpleasant jobs. For instance, he had a regular contract for cleaning all the lavatories in the district. In those days there were eight lavatories in the district out of a total of two hundred houses. He also was pleased to accept commissions for burying rotten corpses of animals that had been discovered by the sanitary officer. He was an adept at castration, which he performed at the fixed rate of a penny for a pair of testicles. It

gave him such pleasure that he performed the operation free on practically worthless animals like billy goats. Billy goats especially fascinated him. It is recorded that he once was asked to slaughter a particularly evil smelling one by a widow and he offered his services free on the condition that she allowed him to do it with a hatchet. So he hacked the stinking brute and literally cut him to pieces, while a crowd stood about and yelled with joy as the billy goat, tied to a stone by a halter, dodged hither and thither from the blows, with his gore showering about him on the ground every time he shook his head.

He was extremely clever at getting money from strangers. In those days a great number of visitors came to our island. It had just been discovered by the new school of European mysticism and was considered to be the chief reserve of the gods and fairies of the Celtic Twilight. It was by exploiting these mystics that Patsa collected the golden sovereigns which are the subject of this story.

Every time the steamer arrived from the city, Patsa was standing on the pier head, in his dirty white suit, erect, motionless, with his hands in the pockets of his waistcoat, with his yellow muffler and his tam-o'-shanter cap, with his foul ears cocked and his green eyes peering from beneath the rims of his bushy white eyebrows, moving hither and thither like the eyes of a sea hawk, with his mouth open and his tongue fiddling with his solitary, yellow tooth. Nobody escaped him. It was impossible to resist his advances. He had that magnetic quality which is possessed by great whores and by madmen who believe themselves to be gods. He had no fixed method of approach. At times he would dash up and seize a bag and lead the stranger to the hotel and on the way engage himself as guide, porter, story-teller or procureur. With another he might pose as a picturesque fisherman, proud, reluctant, a man to be painted or helped for humanitarian and mystical reasons. With another he became a buffoon and was even seen to dance and pretend to be mad. With another he would rush up and commence with great vehemence to beg, showing false scars on his body like a pariah of the ancient East. He stalked others, appearing before them in lonely places, near ancient fortresses, among the ruins of old churches, leaning against prehistoric pagan stones that are supposed to have occult associations. There, in a hollow voice, he told poets and scholars and dramatists, who are now famous, most of the legends and mystic lore that became current in Ireland and even in Europe during the past generation, relating to the Celtic Twilight.

Patsa, with his foul ears and his chancred nose, would descend to any low depths in order to earn a sovereign, or even a sixpenny-bit. It was even said that he tried to sell his own fleas to an English nobleman who collects fleas from all over the world, and made a tour of our district in search of a rare specimen that was said to inhabit the place.

I have laid stress on his cunning in order to give especial point to the manner in which he was finally outwitted by his wife, whom we all thought to be an idiot. Her name was Nuala. She was small and round and plump in spite of old

age. She rarely left her own yard. When she saw anybody she always ran into her house, rolling in her gait, like an uneven stone going slowly down a hill. She never had any children. She was noted by the peculiar capacity she had for blurting at will. Indeed, small boys used to call after her: "Blurt for us, Nuala."

The unspeakable Patsa even exploited this strange talent of his wife for his own pleasure. He amused himself during the long winter evenings by getting her to kneel on the hearthstone, with her elbows on the ground. Then he would lash her with a dried willow rod, causing her to blurt with great violence. The young blackguards of the neighbourhood were in the habit of crawling up underneath Patsa's window and crouching there in order to listen to this extraordinary performance. But one night a young fellow tried to see as well as hear and brought a torch which he flashed into the room. Nuala thought it was lightning and went into a faint, thinking God had punished her for her immodesty. From that night she never again allowed her husband to beat her for the purpose of making her blurt.

Because of his wife's refusal to satisfy him in this respect, Patsa redoubled his cruelty in other directions towards her, and towards all life. He used to crawl up behind his wife and stick a big needle in her as far as it would go. As she was short sighted, he used to tie a rope across the lane through which she went to the well. He gave her salt instead of sugar for her tea, and he found great pleasure in exploding a packet of gunpowder he stole, by throwing it into the fire while she was crouching over it. He gave her no money to buy food and she had to live on the charity of neighbours.

He himself went about seeking devilment, tying cords on sheep's thighs, knocking walls, pissing in water troughs, terrifying people at night by making strange noises at places that were said to be haunted. He slashed the canvas of curraghs and set fire to hay and exposed his person to young women.

But such was the fear in which he was held that nobody dared interfere with him.

Then suddenly, in his seventy-ninth year, Patsa became seriously ill and took to his bed. The cause of his illness was unknown, but was said to result from eating canned food that had been washed ashore from the wreck of an American ship. That is plausible enough, as he became almost paralysed and both his passages closed up, so that he was given up for lost. Whatever he ate it made a lump in his stomach and the doctor could do nothing to relieve him. At last, the doctor told him that he had only a few hours to live and that he should send for the priest, confess his sins and get anointed.

Neighbours came in when it was heard that the doctor had told Nuala to fetch the priest. The neighbours were naturally delighted that the good God was at last going to deliver them from such a monster, but they also felt a certain awe at the prospect of losing such a famous one.

The house was an extraordinary sight. From outside it looked like an unused barn, with its stone walls almost naked of mortar, with its thatched roof as hollow as the back of an old

stray horse, and with its unpainted door tied by a piece of string. Inside, in the two rooms, there seemed to rest all the smells that Patsa had brought with him from his unsavoury employments. There were great holes in the earthen floor. In a corner there were old potatoes sprouting, with long, unhealthy, white buds sticking up. There was a mound of ashes on the hearth. From the earthen roof and the wooden rafters hung amazing labyrinthine structures made by spiders, in whose meshes lay dead countless enormous flies, beetles and strange insects. The walls were of all colours, caused by rain that dripped through the roof. In the bedroom there was a disreputable bed, on which Patsa was lying, and in a corner, a pallet, used by Nuala since her husband got ill. Patsa, lying on his back in bed, with his tam-o'-shanter on his head and his yellow muffler around his neck, as yellow in the face as tanned leather, looked like a devil. Still people came in to console him and to try to prepare him for death as is the custom. For it is said by the founders of the race that even the soul of a dying dog is saved by a pat on the snout and a kind word in the ear.

So they talked to him and told him that God was good and that Jesus Christ was crucified and that the road to heaven was made of angels' wings and that souls were carried up it on a white horse that could twist soogauns with the fastest wind. But they might as well have been harlots whispering in a eunuch's ears for all the notice Patsa took of them.

"Hi!" said Patsa. "By the Cross of Christ! When sly neighbours come around the bed of death they have the eyes of crows and the only desire they have is to be thieves in the gardens of paradise. But never you fear. My treasure is hidden and I'll be counting it in the company of saints in heaven."

Then they said to him that he should make his peace now with God and with his wife. In the presence of the priest, they said, it was fitting for him to make provision for the old woman with whatever he had saved, in order to save her withered thighs voyages of beggary from door to door. And they said it must be a queer number of pennies he had saved, since everyone knew that the gentry paid well for having their privies cleaned and whitewashed, and many a stranger had given sovereigns for the stories he told them.

But Patsa answered them and said:

"Hi! Why should I leave her anything, the barren hag? She poisoned me, so I couldn't loose a button for the last eight days."

The neighbours then went into the kitchen and sat around Nuala, and Nuala wept. The priest came, but Patsa closed his eyes and mouth.

"Make your peace with God and with your wife," said the priest.

Patsa said nothing. So the priest oiled him and went away. The neighbours also went away. Then Patsa called in his wife.

"Look here," he said. "Do what I tell you now, if you don't want me to put my curse on you from my bed of death. Bring me a saucepan full of gruel."

"I have no meal to make it," she said. "Give me the money and I'll fetch it."

"Go and beg it," he said. "Be quick or I'll put a dying man's curse on you."

She went and got meal from a neighbour. Then she made the gruel and brought it to him in a saucepan. She stood by the bed to see him take it.

"Leave the room," he said, "and close the door after you."

Nuala left the room and closed the door after her. She was sitting by the kitchen fire for a long time, when at last she heard a terrible groan, then anotherand then a raucous sound, like a man trying to vomit. She ran into the bedroom.

"Is it choking you are?" she said.

Patsa was speechless. His face was blue. He had his two hands on his belly. The saucepan was on a stool beside the bed. She took it up and looked into it. As she did so the saucepan canted to one side and something rattled against the side amidst the remains of the gruel at the bottom.

"Great God!" she said. "Did his old yellow tooth fall into the gruel out of his mouth? He must be near dead, sure enough."

She shuffled out into the kitchen with the saucepan and emptied the remains of the gruel on to a plate. Then she uttered a cry. There were two gold sovereigns among the dregs of the gruel. She ran back into the bedroom and looked at Patsa. Then she saw that he no longer had the yellow muffler around his neck, but that it was lying on the bed. She snatched at it, held it up and then learned what she had been trying to find out for years, poking around the house. It was in the muffler he had hidden his money. It was now ripped and torn in many places and she could see the marks of the little round beds made by the sovereigns.

Then the simple, stupid woman grew as cruel and cunning as a weasel when she realised that Patsa had swallowed his gold in order to take it to the grave with him. He was looking up at her with a queer look of joy in his little green eyes, in spite of his pain. He was enjoying his last perversion with his gut full of gold. He opened his mouth and wagged his yellow tooth in her face.

Then she uttered a wild cry and ran out of the house as fast as her old legs could carry her. She reached a neighbour's house, stood on the floor and cried out, panting:

"Give me, for the sake of God's mother, the oil ye bought for the sick cow, for I must make that old ruffian scutter before the devil snatches him or I'm a beggar woman."

"Yerrah, what ails ye, woman?" said the neighbour.

"Hand me out that bottle of castor oil," said Nuala, "and I'll walk barefoot around the seven temples of the Romans and pray for the the souls of your ancestors."

"Jesus!" said the neighbour. "He's put a spell on ye. Is it out of yer mind ye are? Sure ye wouldn't give him that dose that is stronger than the dynamite they have for blasting quarries? Let him die in peace."

"By the fires of hell," she said. "He'll die in peace all right, but he'll die with an empty gut, if I have to rip him with my

limpet dagger. And I'll make him lose his gold before the sun goes down."

So then she told the neighbour what Patsa had done, and the neighbour forthwith gave her the pint of castor oil and with it a still stronger concoction made from the juice of limpets and sea-rock weeds. They mixed the two together and went back to Patsa.

When he saw them coming, carrying the horrible mess in a spouty jug, he realised their purpose and made an effort to raise himself and defend his gold. But they laid him flat on the bed, using him roughly and shouting :

"Open your gob now till we empty you, you skinful of lechery."

"Take care now and make no noise or we'll slice your instrument with a jagged razor."

"Aye!" they cried, again and again, and they terrified his dying eyes and his ears with the devilish looks on their faces and the threats that came from their lips.

So he lay still and allowed them to close his nostrils and to prize open his jaws and to pour the jugful down his throat. Then they slapped his belly and gave him a great tumbling and whacking fore and aft, till he began to rumble like a ship's cargo broken loose in a gale. Then they lifted him out of the bed and seated him and he began to void himself.

"Hey! Hey!" said Nuala. "I knew how to doctor him. Will ye listen to him now? Playing on his drum like a heifer in spring grass. Work away now, ye devil, and I hope yer fundament comes out."

"Aw! Aw! Aw! cried Patsa. "Have pity on me."

"Devil a pity," cried Nuala, giving him a great whack between the shoulder blades. "Deliver every one of them or I'll cut ye open from navel to gullet."

"Aw!" said Patsa, recovering his speech as he became empty. "The Jews crucified our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, but they never jalloped his dying breath."

"Will ye listen to him blaspheme?" said Nuala. "By Christ! Ye drove the heart crosswise in me long enough with yer curses, but I don't give a straw for ye now or yer curses."

Patsa began a long litany of curse. But they, taking no notice of his curses, flung him back on the bed when his labours had ceased. Then they carried off the pot with great joy.

They salvaged the gold and before night came the whole neighbourhood knew of their exploit, for Nuala and her friend promptly got drunk and then returned to the house with a jar of whiskey. Other cronies came and they shook the rafters through the night with their singing of bawdy songs, while Patsa writhed in agony on his bed, listening to them.

A little after midnight, he heard his wife in her drunken gaiety begin an exhibition of her talent for the amusement of her mates. Patsa uttered a loud shriek of rage and died.

So that those foolish people who consider cunning a desirable quality, should take a lesson from the sad end of the wise Patsa, who died, raped of his gold, amidst the revelry of drunken hags.

PASTORALE

SONG OF THE WITLESS BOY

Below my pretty love I lie . . .
She nakedly, upon the sky,
White like a swan,
With blue eyes open to the air
Floats in the cradle of her hair;
Hey nonny non!

Death hath no fear for me,
Life hath no care for me,
Merry and glad;
Who would change place with me,
Laugh and gain grace with the
Sky-witch's lad?

The old ewe runs among the thorns,
The young ram itches in the horns,
Winter is gone;
The mumping priests go down the way
Where Meg and Katie stook the hay,
Hey nonny non!

So let's sing cheerily,
Dance, and be verily
Merry and glad . . .
Who would change place with me,
Laugh and gain grace with the
Sky-witch's lad?

My darling on a cloudy steed
Rode in December, and, indeed,
Her glances shone
Yellow like lightning up above,
But never hotter than my love;
Hey nonny non!

Spring has come back again,
Nothing to lack or gain—
Still we are glad;
Who would change place with me,
Laugh and gain grace with the
Sky-witch's lad?

O you who throw your tenderest trust
Upon a maiden got from dust,
Go sigh, grow wan . . .
And learn, though late, no woman yet
Of earthy stamp was worth a fret,
Hey nonny non!

(Betsy and Josephine,
Poll, Doll, and Eveline)
Folly run mad!
I would not change with ye,
Drop 'em and range with the
Sky-witch's lad.

Hugh McCrae

IN THE APPLE-COUNTRY

In the apple-country, in the apple-trees,
The boughs are bubbling with pink snow
To frost the fields. A thousand birds fall crying,
Sharp and sweet, like morning-stars, in seas
Deeper than air. A thousand blossoms blow,
Drops of gold blood, like flowers gone flying,
Drowning with foam the drowsy girls below.

These country-girls, in hats of straw,
Take kissing as a natural law,
Put up their cheeks, like rosy saucers,
Gravely on tiptoe waiting.
They plainly do not know the dangers
This practise breeds from courteous strangers,
Who find, on airing their politeness,
Such local customs captivating.

As for my part, under the trees,
I found a girl with tawny knees,
Pretty enough, at a hurried view.
We lay on blossoms, glassed with dew.
I didn't notice her till we kissed.
How pleasant, a sentimentalist!

Kenneth Slessor

FROM THE HEDGE

There is no shadow in the wood
But kisses have sown violets there:
There is no grave deep solitude
But once has jocund laughed
At lovers, kissing-daft,
Who prankt with gold the air.

So leave the butter in the churn
And leave your hat upon the hook,
To taste amid the knee-deep fern
This sky-blue junketing
Of air and earth and spring
Where none will think to look.

Francis Crossley

BEDDING

The sun has clapt me out of bed
At the broad rise of day
Where with Polly at my side
I slept upon the hay. . . .

I have stolen in the inn's backdoor
And gone to lie with Nell,
Stepping warily through the dark,
And though it pleased me well—

Though more, I've picked the likeliest wench
When I had coins to throw,
Regardless of the price, and been
Not cheated—yet I know

That never have I been so glad
As when upon the hay
We loved so heartily we slept
And did not wake till day.

Francis Crossley

SEDUCER

You are religious?
—Well, if I say
The Immortal Gods
Walk on the wide earth still
And laugh with us
In our love's play
On this sunny-grassed hill;
And wherever we go
In restaurants, cinemas, taxis, trams,
Our wishes unravelling
Wherever we are travelling;
The Immortal Gods
Smile at us
Cuddling on the top of a bus:
—Would you believe it is so?
Yes? No?
You are religious,
Then of course you believe
That They can perceive
Us here, you and me;
And let me inform you that Aphrodite
Despises virginity
And She will protect us
With a Goddess' cloaking
From bishops, rabbis, priests,
Mothers, fathers, and other beasts
Of pray croaking
That Love is a sin . . .

Priests hate your Beauty
When you are kist,
But the True Gods exist
They are smiling to us
Undo this pin.
They are smiling to us
In our sun-field of daisies . . .
You believe in the Gods?
To the Gods be all praises.

P. R. Stephensen

THIS GIRL

She walks with the drunken wind for lover, this girl—
This mad girl who can't tell the thighs of shadows
From those of Dick and Tom and drunken Harry
As she goes walking with the wind along the meadows.

This girl is a spirit who is not yet born,
But wed to sun and air and to the drunken wind:
She cares not how she treads, so young are her thoughts,
And nobody knows how young is her unborn mind.

She lays her languid body out under the trees;
And, lying with the drunken wind, round her lover's eyes
She curls her slender body, round and round,
Like a young tree curling its branches round the skies.

The wind runs up out of the grass, and over her—
She listens to the wind running up out of the grass,
And sighs to hear the shepherd's pipe, and sighs,
Shutting her eyes, and waits for him to pass.

Elza de Locre

LARK BEFORE SPRING

The sky droopt cold and vapour-bound,
A cerecloth round the dead earth flung,
And gulls, poor stormscraps, flockt the ground,
Brabbling for frosty forage; and yet
Spring spiced upon me when that bird
Showered up, and ransackt his rich lung
For silver clamours, till the sky swung—
A foundering belfry. Though his voice
Was wrencht sweet pulse from pulse apart,
I heard in my enchanted heart
Earth's multitude of memnon-lips
Pledging unborn apocalypse.

Stanley Snaith

DUNG OF PEGASUS

A SERIAL NARRATIVE BY PETER MEADOWS

PART I

Hypothesis : Chapter the First

Here in this tousled merriment of earth,
A sense of humour and syphilis eating through flesh,
And swamping heavens fuming out of whisky
And turning the kidneys to weird charts of purple
Discussed (with lantern-slides) at Temperance-meetings,
Let us wonder a moment what microscopic chaos
Is this unknown thing called after many names :
Psyche, the Butterfly's faltering flight through gold,
Alias Spirit. This translucent thing
Blushing through crystal happiness and flowers
Swaddled in arctic scents and a net of kisses
As a great tree pulls down the sagging darkness
Over itself and the stars spun on its leaves.
This shining thing ribbed like the trellised wind
With aerial laughter and a film of beauty
Piled on the thawing sun ;
yet cribbed at last
In sweat, and chewing up decaying bulls
With a relish mixed with conversation on
Murder and Artichokes.
This tethered Moon
Yet has dangled tides snowed after it.
We, through dazed childhood and a puberty
Dreamed off in lavatories of the Ideal
And fingered swoons that end with the knock-kneed housemaid
Taking our destiny of shapeless kisses
In her own hands . . . must on the screen of flesh
Trace the bright patterns of the searing Sun,
The nursling Forms of light, with back still turned
To the flames of asphodel ; and from dark senses
We unravel beauty, and the tethered Moon.

What then is an Autobiography ?
Not only the prim and whispering memory
Of spiritual rapes in crowded trams
And those little fountains of burnished laughter set
Among the wallowing trees, for girls we took
Clumsily, madly, and inarticulately,
In parks on overcoats and rocky shadows,
At parties on the fire-escapes, the seaside,
In drawing-rooms when the rest of the family were out,
Or in the lounging secrecy of flats.
Vaguely we take them ; but amid caught hands,
Defiance standing on a tavern-table,
And a collapse of kisses, come too easy,
Or lost in a melting anguish of the bowels,

(These huddled facts smeared on blinking thought)
We complete the gesture in the mind, and that's
The most significant fact of the whole lot.

Childhood: Chapter the Second

It was a gold day, and the cotton-wool of the sunlight hung in dazzling tatters on the trees as though the sheep of the sky had pushed through them. It was shady against the shaggy coat of the rock peeling with a minute green skin of age, and we watched people going up and down the steps in the distance on the right. Most of them had hats on and they walked quickly for the asphalt was hot. The view was transfused for me with the smell of running tar scorching through rubber soles, and I ran my fingers gratefully through the cool bristly hair of the grass. The heat flowed down the steps in vaporous eddies of glass, getting mixed up with the flowering parasols and the twinkling hands. Several old gentlemen took out handkerchiefs to pick the burrs of heat out of their beards; and the birds bathing in the showers of trickling melody they tossed into the air from their beaks thought it great fun. So did I.

Henrietta, however, found the day arduous. She was not wearing any garters and the heat kept pulling down her stockings. So she took me into her lap. Somebody was hoisting a flag up below us, and I was wondering what would happen if it would not stop when it got to the top of the pole, and sailed straight up into the air. Probably a soldier would shoot it down. So of course my attention was divided.

It was a hot day, I said, of flowing gold; and I was a small boy taken upon its wide lap of heat, of an image clear and yet as impermanent as a shape struck by sunlight out of moving water: fading, a wordless language, a dimensionless picture, toneless music. A maturity of instinct clothes itself for an instant in the misty senses of the child. And, lacking the fixation of the word, of the definitive tone, it passes away into the measureless limbo behind the shifting contours of a flittering consciousness. But it is not lost; or, rather, as nothing can be lost, I should say it is not even submerged in the fleeting mass of recorded sensations. It passes, but when later the body assumes its sexual meaning, it returns with no line disturbed. I remember this event more clearly than I remember the kiss with which I kissed last, though the day after I had apparently forgotten all about it; for it did not climb back in memory to trouble my mind for a solution or my senses for a repetition of its nameless emotion.

It is like a Greek bronze gone down out of memory and fished up centuries later. Time flows over the gesture and buries it under an unsifted lumber of sensation, fathoms of opaque experience. But when life so wills, it returns to daylight, parting the cloud of time, naive and complete.

Then too there were the afternoons at home when all the others were out. The ceiling had a wreath of complicated plaster babies which puzzled me mathematically. The loincloths were so arranged that each trunk could claim with equal

justice two pairs of legs; and the flying permutations of these cupids gave me something to sort out and number. Then there were some small curtain tassels on one side near enough to count; and it was amusing to look up at the rough unstained bottom of the table, the grain, minute spiders' webs, and some interesting pencil marks left by the carpenters.

I can see her only through dark silks. I think of her and I am in the arms of a Titaness, smothered in whispers and scratched with warm cloth. A thing of murmurous contacts, not of learnt shapes. She let night down out of her hair, a darkness of serge; I can remember her little finger, but not her face.

She was soon dismissed, I do not know why. Still, I knew that scandal was rushing about in the air over my head, though I could not reach up to pull it down.

However, a little after, we had some magnificent Chinese fireworks, and the ceiling in the drawing-room collapsed the morning after the party, which was a great solace.

Shortly before or after this, it is hard to relate childish memories, I met Dolly. We played in her grounds, climbing as high into the trees as we could, riding the sunlight; and burrowed among bushes, keen for a perfect shelter in case the country should be invaded, as seemed very probable. The insoluble problem of such a hiding-place is provisions; and as the only food easily obtainable is bread, which in a very short time becomes fossilised like a dainty of sand or turns fungoid, it is very difficult to hoard anything likely to preserve life during a lengthy retirement.

There were also some sheds, used for storing purposes; and in the upper storey of these, reached only by a ladder, we played a lot. Our houses adjoined; and in my mind the rooms, some one side, some the other, tumble together, alike filled with dust, rust, ironmongery and sacks, motiveless embraces and military operations. Vast stand those ribs of monstrous metal, shadows that rattled at a breadth, winding caverns of silence, and old buckets.

Ridiculous crockery of giants. In the late afternoon, the choked stillness was like that of a den cluttered with brazen bones by some untidy ogre; that nasty dry hot smell rust shares with blood. On our side ran a long disused gallery where I liked to lurk, though the iron mould on our clothes gave us away more than the sawdust I took home in hair and trousers from Dolly's. Old bedsteads, ferruginous lances, and spraying plumes of dust shaken from wire mattresses that jingled like spinets prodigiously out of tune, and the dirty light that straggled through brown paper and discoloured glass from high up, the cupolas of rich dingy gloom. Lead pipes that you could see through, if you took care not to pour dust in your eye as you held them up to the window—blowpipes, like the eagerly sought reeds that always broke. Stinking garden of wrought-iron flowers and chipped jugs, old photographs stained from the wet ring of a cup, teapots without spouts which we thought it fun to fill with a less palatable liquid than tea, and tin baths that had last received nudity emerging with an irrelevant beauty of smooth rounded arms, breasts, and thighs,

from Gothic leg-of-mutton sleeves, scraggy ornamentation, and omnipresent whalebone and flannel. Where that nudity, escaped from the vile laces of a crustaceous morality, had wielded a lascivious sponge, we hoisted a bedpost for mast, and sailed on. The tin dented and sprang back with a rasping clatter at every movement we made, that was the bottom scraping against razor-teethed reefs. However, we did not sink, though at times a squabble would overturn the vessel, somebody was hurt, threatened to tell on everybody, and had to be pacified or intimidated.

What is the truth of the envious sentiment with which the adult regards childhood, and into which I find myself drifting as I write the above? That sentiment cannot arise because childhood is pre-eminently blithe and innocent, for childhood knows at least as much black and endless agonies as it knows happinesses. It knows fear and a dazed torment, the pleasures of cruelty, of giving chocolates filled with cayenne or soap to your best friend, or seeing him sprawl over on gravel. It loves to throw stones, afraid of causing damage, yet desperately hopeful of it. Hate and murder live in every crumb of cake your friend gets beyond your share. Children lie naturally, and are so delighted when successful that they convince themselves most of all. Their nightmares are too terrible to be recalled even dimly by the grown-up.

Why then do we all sentimentalise our childhood? Perhaps it is because the responsibility of consciousness, the yoke of a riveted identity, did not then properly exist, because it represents a half-way house back to the womb of death towards which almost all mankind revolves, and which exerts its pull, defied or not, on all of us.

But whatever the reason, we certainly phrase that yearning falsely when we impute to the child the faculty of imaginative communion with the jollity of beauty, with the trailing clouds of glory that are supposed to muffle him, when he seeks nothing more than sweet food and puppy-like play. The child lives behind no veil of crystalline sensation. To say his senses are fresh is to say they are muddled. True freshness only comes when the senses are disciplined sufficiently for us to detach from the chaotic impact of life the momentary reconciliation of an image. And that is a process not of living but of art.

The only joy flowers ever gave me or any other child was the joke over Pee-the-beds, those bilious-hued wildflowers with a coarse sappy scent when plucked. There were nasturtiums which I knew because we chewed the peppery seeds, though we did not like them. The sky was acknowledged to be blue, night considered uniformly black. Beyond that, nature was wind and rain and the ground beneath my feet, bushes that I hid in, trees that I climbed. But there was no mystic sense of the flower's spirted rapture and Nature's great hands clapping together.

But small girls have at least a direct and definite sexual curiosity. So Dolly took the lead, though of course I acquiesced with a sly heartiness in all her suggestions.

Then there were three ragamuffins supplanted by detective

stories, and I went to school. There I experienced the tragical shames, the pariahdom that only diarrhœa can produce.

Sometimes I used to walk home with Alice, three years my elder, who treated me with a fine contempt of kisses.

What Beauty did I milk for memory in those days? For, reject as I may the conventional sentimentalities over childhood, I find myself submitting to other ones. What happens, blindly and without purpose, in childhood, assumes a profound purpose in the mind's depths. The child is subsconsciously storing all the essences of form till the time when the scissors of the mind can cut them out into individualised patterns. Though we are then the merest bobbing buoys in a turgid sea of sense, we are absorbing the dull mass of physical and emotional data which is the common heritage of all on earth. Life actually begins when we begin to use this undigested material to define an image of perfected individuality. Therefore the majority of mankind never reach that point in Time which marks the birth of life, and which disregards equally the silly chronologies of the Christian with his odd 6,000 years and the scientist with his odd billion years.

It seems to me that in my memory of these earliest girls I recall a symbol of sunken beauty wraithed behind the waters of earth's flustered senses. When I turn to love, I turn to this. I turn to it through them.

They were big; tall giantesses, very strong and brave and full of a warmth of cradling gold, and their hair could cover me, and I could hide in it, and their silence knew all the things I did not know, even why one kisses, and they stood tall in my mind till they faded into imaginations of the moon.

Cloudy essences of flesh with proud bellies.

Private Theatricals at Fourteen: Chapter the Third

"Go on, you can be the hero, and I'll be the heroine, and Allan can be the villain. Go on!"

"But what am I to do if I *am* the hero?" I asked, pleasurably frightened.

"O you must make love to me of course. I'm the heroine."

"What about me?" said Allan.

"You don't come on yet. You've got to try to trap me afterwards. But this is the first scene now where the hero makes love to the heroine."

"We can't do it here," I said hopefully.

"Yes, we can," replied Esther with scorn. "I'll draw a line with this chalk. Now, over that's the stage. That's what they call the footlights," she explained contemptuously. "The footlights, because it's near the actor's feet and they have lights all along it."

"I don't believe it," said Allan. "It'd only light their feet. People don't put lamps on the floor. And they'd kick them over."

"Well, they have other lights too," she conceded gravely to science. "But anyhow this is the stage and you're the audience till later on when you're the villain, Allan, and you try

to force me to marry you and put a baby on my doorstep or something. Bring up some chairs and put them into a line."

"One'll do."

"It won't do. Who ever heard of a theatre with only one seat? How do you think we're going to act properly if it doesn't look like a theatre?"

"That footlights is enough to put anyone off. It's nothing like a theatre. . . ."

"It is." She turned austerely to me. "Now we'll start acting."

"Well?"

"Go on."

"How?"

"Just act. You know."

"What?"

"O you are tiresome. You know you're the hero. Make love."

"But I must have something to say."

"Say: I love you."

"I love you."

"You mustn't say it like that, you must say it like this: I . . . LOVE . . . YOU. . . ." She spoke with a passionate hiss, an anguished sincerity, as though she surrendered each word with miserly reluctance. She threw her arms around me, she kissed me on the chin. I saw a tragic eye beam into mine, one inch away, a Cyclopean Eye that seemed in the middle of her forehead, ridiculously intent upon me, image of the Methodist God, arcana of severe lewdness chiselled in pale blue and swimming glass. One of my arms which had been raised in a poor gesture of defence was jammed between us awkwardly, the other hung loosely at my side. She held me powerfully, but with no more apparent interest than an instructor demonstrating a wrestling catch. The rise and fall of her breasts seemed unaware of their tight pressure against me. Her breath came evenly. Her eye was ruthlessly professional. She let me go.

"Do you understand now?"

"Yes . . . I think so. . . ."

"Well, say it."

"I . . . Love . . . You . . ." I cried with vehement lack of expression.

"A little better," she conceded critically, knitting her eyebrows. I tried to sit down with the air of one who has at last completed an arduous task.

"We haven't started yet," she reprimanded me. "Come on, say it again."

"I can't do it."

"Yes you can."

"Really!"

"Yes you can."

I once more draped myself before her in the attitude of one about to attempt the standing high jump. She eyed me sternly. "Go on."

"I . . . Love . . . You. . . ."

"You'll be alright soon. Anyhow you're good enough now to get on with the acting. Kiss me next time. Go on." Her voice was cold but encouraging, impersonally pedagogic; she was a producer and nothing else; it was clear she was wrapt up in the play and had no other thoughts.

"I LOVE YOU."

I launched myself at her. I caught her round the waist. Then I hesitated, and she went to kiss me herself just as I had summoned up courage to jerk out my face. Our heads collided noisily, and I sank down on to a chair, abandoning the embrace.

"You did look a pair of fools," said Allan, when he had finished laughing. "Acting's no good, isn't there something better we can do?"

"Go away if you don't like it. We do, don't we?" A peevish note disturbed for the first time the serene impersonality of the actress-manageress.

". . . Yes."

"You're both rotten actors." Allan went inside.

"Come on now," commanded the indefatigable actress, her voice resuming its hard emotionless timbre. But I felt less idiotic now that Allan had gone, and if I still said the I-love-you with a dull and serious cadence as though my voice had suddenly lost all resonance and floated ineffectively against the back of my teeth, the kiss went much more realistically. If she had only shut her theatrical eye, I might have. . . . Who knows?

We stood irresolute. "You say something now," I said at last. "The hero can't talk all the time,"

She thought. I stayed with my hand still resting on her hip. But the withdrawal of the audience, while making things otherwise easier, rather upset the effect as a genuine rehearsal.

"I don't think we'll act any more. Plays are too hard to make up." I let my hand fall. We stood looking at each other distrustfully.

That night I leaned over the balcony. I used then to talk half aloud verses to myself, pushing them this way and that like a lump of plasticine; rhyming Thee and Beauty and counting the syllables on my fingers.

And so Love took my hand one two one two one two
And showed me to her No
And showed her me one two one two
And showed me her
And Love had wings that had been rainbows
And Love had wings red-tipt with my heart
One two one two one two one that's wrong
And Love had wings all red-tipt from my heart

I had got as far as that when I heard Allan and Esther below in the night's garden. I knew it well: mignonette and poinsettias, strange contrast of the lanky strips of the scarlet leaves and the nestling drab-coloured miniature spires of scent. I heard them, though it was too dark to see what they were doing; but of course they laughed. I felt exquisitely sorrowful, isolated from mankind by a heavenly doom of refined torment. I would renounce Love. Yet if I had only followed up that kiss. . . . Why hadn't I? I would kiss the next girl I was alone with,

even for a second. I would, I would. No, I would renounce Love, I would never touch a woman. I though of my boyhood's scrambling affairs with distaste, I desired an ineffable virginity. But I soothed myself with the memory that Saint Francis of Assisi, tradition says, also had a libertine past.

The last line of the sestet was finished as I lay in bed—

Love's coin has her one side, the other God.

I clenched my nails into my palms until they hurt. I turned and hit the back of my hand hard against the wall. I bit my lip till it seemed that I tasted blood. I took some of the spit on my finger to see if I was truly bleeding, but the night was too dark to distinguish saliva from blood.

Straight opposite the verandah on which I slept, a light flashed on. The blind was drawn up by a girl. She had black hair smoothed round an oval face with a large mouth. I knew her well by sight. She went and sat down by her dressing-table. I watched her with in-drawn breath. Endlessly she sat looking at herself; then slowly, luxuriously, she let her hair down and brushed it. Endlessly she brushed it. No one ever sat brushing hair so long. She finished at last, but still she sat with her head propped up, gazing at herself. Time had stopped, had run down; and we were sinking for ever between two widening seconds. I would never be able to sleep again, so what did it matter? I would waste away. I was glad I would die so young, very glad, resentfully glad. But I would like to have some means of letting the others know that I had been martyred, how I had put life wearily by; some terrible testament of renunciation. I would soon be dead. I forced tears into my eyes to prove to myself how much I suffered. The wetness of my lashes pleased me. If anyone were here now he could not doubt my suffering. And still the Girl in the Mirror claimed relentlessly the eyes of the other, her slave, her wondering instrument—flesh to be rouged and corseted to placate this image in the glass of thought.

My heart was beating furiously; the bed rattled faintly from my uneasy movements. All things seemed galloping to a dreaded, desired culmination of thudding death. The clothes were thrown off, and I stirred in pendular torment. I thought that even across the silent darkness of the street she would hear the gulping beat of my excited heart.

She rose and removed her outer dress. Suddenly she remembered, went over and pulled the blind down. My tension broke. I felt that I was stifling. Darkness had knees upon my chest. My life ebbed to the decreasing jangle at the foot of the bed. Strange fate that holds mysterious naked girls in its palm, that unwindows them so near, and then takes back by a little chance what would have come as so incredible, so incalculable a gift. So little a thing. So great. I heard all the happy lovers in the world whispering together, and I struck my hand again and again on the metal of the bedstead.

(To be continued and completed in six instalments.)

TWO POEMS

LEBANON AT APPENRODT'S

My beloved is high on a bus
  As if it were his own ship sailing,
He crosses over with quick glances
  And I am queen and he is king.

The friend has hair like a gold cap
  And a parma skirt above her knees,
She is the wonder of London
  And the waiters are black bees.

My lover is eating smoked red salmon
  And the maidens in Oxford Street are wan;
Bring large light laagers that he may drink
  Who is the musk of Marylebone.

Surely the lights have been put lower,
  My fair one has gone into the Ladies.
Nights of short sleep with her were worth
  Westminster Bank and all there is.

E. Powys Mathers

THE MARRIAGE-FLUTE

The lantern-shadows, lip to lip,
Repeat the quarrel we dispute,
In pantomiming lovership—
The poignard breast, the moving hip
All doubly dance the mazy mute
Bolero of the marriage-flute.

So wane the hours until the Sun,
Pavilioned in his golden light,
Betrays us mingled, grown to one
Miraculous hermaphrodite.

Hugh McCrae

BULLETS AND BALLOTS

(BOOK REVIEW IN THE FORM OF A RHAPSODY FOR THE BARREL-ORGAN)

by P. R. STEPHENSEN

I

Facilitate Stygian transits
Toll Utopian funeral knells
And celebrate Bolshevik obsequies
For the passing of Shaw and Wells. . . .
If Lenin and Trotsky read Wells and Shaw
No doubt they were perfectly charmed;
Beautiful theories appeal to the soul
When the Workers are Rising, armed:
But who would read Shaw now Soviet Russia
Is governed by *hoi polloi?*
A Cheka in hand is worth two in the armchair.
Bullets not words, destroy . . .
And the Modern Mamma talks freely of Sex
To improve her daughter's mind,
But she tells her to read Marie Stopes, not Wells,
If practically inclined . . .
The Open Conspiracy Nobody Cares About
Nobody cares to hide;
And nobody wants to be guided by
The Intelligent Woman's Guide.

II

Lo in the Valley the Grand Old Methuselah
Playing the Game of Darts,
And Shoving-the-Ha'penny of the Ca-pit-alist
Equalised into its parts. . . .
Loud are the cheers of the plutocrat journalists
Praising the notable sight
Of Our Youngest Old Man of Seventy
Giving The City a terrible fright . . .
Everyman over forty's a Scoundrel,
G.B. used to say
Deplorably truly; for thirty years now
The Dog has Had his Day.
This is the last, surely the last,
Of the (O, how Irish!) series
Of tracts designed to destroy the English
With utterly witty theories:
Alas, now the Red has turned to Silver,
Publishing far and wide,
Even Old Ladies enjoy in their beds
The Witty Old Lady's Guide.

III

And lo in the hill-tops, up in the clouds
Britling is Seeing It Through ;
And the public is Seeing Through Britling nowadays
More than it used to do :
Truth may reside in a well
But not in very bottomless Wells,
(Except the Truth that blathering fantasy
Boosted as reasoning, sells) . . .
HO ! HO ! an ingenious practical joke
Has occurred to some flippant god——
Who touched this middle-class radical
With a holy divining rod,
Combined his romantic imagination
Into a weird alliance
With a simple nineteenth-century
Religious belief in Science ;
Stirred in Democracy, Progress,
Earnestness, glibness, and pomposity ;
To see the result, see Mr. Wells
Afloat in a sea of verbosity.

IV

Query their bona fides,
Query with querying bombs hurled
The bona fides of theoreticians
Who make an Appeal to the World
To be up and doing away (in theory)
With horrible social sores
Such as millionaires and banks
And strikes and poverty and whores
And battleships and City Men
And rents and malnutrition :
—*These things are being abolished* HO ! HO !
By the Labour Politician !
By votes and inevitability
Hear-hears and kind laws ;
By Shaw, M.P. ? and Wells, M.P. ?
Why not ? Perhaps because. . . .

—Ah. Lenin and Trotsky were Up and Doing
And what about Shaw and Wells ?
They are up and doing some more new books
For Socialism Sells.

FAREWELL ROCKING HORSE

CHAPTER FROM AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL

by PHILIP LINDSAY

ROMANCE was in the heavy moonlight that crusted the ocean with zigzags of quicksilver, darkening the beach and making the park a black puddle of magical movement. Shops were alight, and chattering boys and girls crowded the street. From the Casino the jazz band throbbed its higgledy-piggledy notes to trap the dancers' feet and heat their blood. Motor-cars appeared mysteriously from the darkness, giant eyes searchlighting in passers' faces, then as mysteriously flattened themselves against the wall of night, leaving a wink of red tail-lights, a white glare of painted numbers which slowly evaporated.

Rupert and the Midget stood undecided on the corner in front of the hotel where they had been dining. A tram thundered along—Circular Quay via Bellevue—hubadubbed round the corner and rattled to a stop.

"Shall we chase it?" asked Rupert.

"No," said the Midget. "Not yet. I want to stay here."

"What shall we do?"

"I don't know." She gave her time into his hands, very trustingly.

"Swim again?" suggested Rupert after long cogitations.

She shivered. "O, it's far too cold; besides, I hate swimming at night. It always gives me the creeps. No, let's go to the Carnival!"

"The Carnival!" he cried. "Of course, the Carnival. . . ."

Under the awnings of shops they strolled towards the bright circle of huts and tents that was the Carnival. The Midget paused for a moment outside the Casino to hear the music. Many people were standing there already, young lads and girls chattering and listening. Out of the windows high up in the white wall stumbled the tune.

The Midget hummed it to herself, clapping her hands slightly together. "Isn't it gorgeous, Rupert!" she cried, her brown eyes childish with joy.

Rupert didn't answer. The men were staring at the Midget and himself, the girls were very supercilious. He began to feel uncomfortable

"Do you want to go in and dance?" he asked.

O no, she wanted to go to the Carnival. So he took her arm and led her from the footpath to the road.

Over by the tram stop, the Carnival was blazing with electricity. Another Troy being sacked, thought Rupert. Menelaus was there thirsting to butcher Helen. Rupert felt very young, thrilled by the thought of being once again whisked down slippery chutes, made sick on merry-go-rounds, swung on joy-wheels.

"We must go on everything," he laughed.

"Everything!" agreed the Midget. "O, Rupert, don't you just want to go on one of those wheels!"

A happy world. Rupert was fascinated that those gay people laughing among the tents and huts were the same who had fought in the Sydney Pushes not twenty years ago, stabbed with broken bottles, fired guns, kicked men to death. That these young lads with oiled heads and white pants were descendants of the scum of England, the murderers and thieves, the convicts who had smashed stones and built roads. That these young girls, so neat in their clothes, so complacent in their laughter, were the daughters of the trollops and shoplifters posted out to be the mistresses of drunken soldiers, the glorious old Rum Corps. Rupert loved to generalise. The Australian smugness annoyed him, their contempt for every people outside, their unshakeable belief in their own unique genius: he liked to gather the whole race under the name of convict, ignoring the settlers and immigrants, the Gold Rush of the hysterical Fifties. He was an Australian by birth, but he hated his countrymen for their self-satisfaction, so damnably American.

But what did it matter? Let these young cubs parade their shingled ugliness and oiled vulgarity, their old lusts and villainies were fast within their jazz-bound subconsciousness. This was youth, and youth was always clean and brave and lovable, he said. Only the old were dirty.

Rupert enjoyed himself. They purchased for threepence each a seat in a little sickle boat that mounted through the air, jig-sawing up some invisible, intricate ladder, swooping down again, down to bowel-stirring depths, up into the darkness beyond the electric bulbs that were like splinters from some great explosion of light. Up, up, up, up to the stars, up to the horned moon. Rupert made a grab at it, but missed. Stars swirled around them; they were in space. Where was Mumbo Jumbo? Where was God? Then down with a sudden liver-shaking whirl, over, the boat rocked, the Midget screamed, and down, down they went, right on to the heads of the grinning apes below, round and round, and up again, Elijah's chariot; they rocked and mounted and mounted. Winky, Blinky and Nod—was that right? Rupert thought it wasn't. He was dizzy. Right through a comet; or was it a halo?

"Oh," said the Midget when they were on solid ground, "Let's go on one of those slides!"

"Ooo," gasped the Midget afterwards. "Let's have something quieter this time. See if you can win a walking-stick."

"But I don't want a walking-stick," objected Rupert.

"That doesn't matter. You *must* have one," said the Midget, laughing.

So Rupert purchased half a dozen wooden rings and tried to shy them on to tops of bamboo walking-sticks which poked out of little holes in a shelf. One ring nearly succeeded but—thank God—it slipped off. The Midget clapped her hands joyously. But Rupert did not win a walking-stick, and, relieved, steered her towards the ramshackle Krasy Kottage.

Here, floors moved, seats collapsed, the walls revolved, the roof wobbled, electric shocks numbed their hands, and, feeling rather seasick, they were pleased to be out in the fresh air again.

They went on more joy-wheels, swung to the rattle of musical

boxes, drank fizzy drinks through straws, ate sickly sweets, laughed and chattered together. In fact, they were happy and childish again.

The world was a ferial, merry place. Near where they stood, silently happy, holding each other's moist warm hands, there came the sharp report of rifles, and they edged around the crowd to watch the men trying to blow off a tin rabbit's ear. It gave the element of tragedy, decided Rupert, squeezing the Midget's soft arm. Poor bunny! Ping went another rifle, and a little bell rang crisp in the silence. The champion was given a packet of cheap and mouldy cigarettes. Ping, again. Then a series of quick reports; but there was no more bell-ringing, and Rupert and the Midget moved away to a more exciting game.

There was such a lot of silly things to do. Find one's exact weight, for example. Ask the machine-warlock what one's future was, simply by putting a penny in the slot and pulling the handle. The Midget was to be married at forty, have three children, lumbago at fifty, halitosis at seventy, and nineteen grandchildren at eighty. Rupert's future was almost identical, only he should have been married a year ago. At another mysterious engine they received photographs of their future spouses: very old-fashioned couple. The Midget's husband had big glossy side-whiskers and a moustache like a broom. Rupert's wife sported a bang and a collar up to her chin. The same machine informed them of their lucky months, of their business abilities, and of all their future ailments, which were quite respectable.

It was so thrilling!

Aimlessly, the pair wandered through the happy crowd of the Bondi fête champêtre. Balloons wavered duskily above them through the night like cherubim faces peering out of heaven. Children blew lugubrious toy whistles. The aerial railway let off steam in a despairing echo. Sideshows displayed fossilized mermaids done in terra-cotta, the world's thinnest woman, its smallest man, it's most tattooed female—all vitally interesting. Ah, magical, plangent world! Rupert felt light-headed; saturnalia of to-day with trousered satyrs and shingled nymphs who looked as though they had been caught in a bush fire and had had their lovely hair roasted off. It was all idiotically fascinating.

But there was no merry-go-round. Rupert was disappointed. He wanted to mount again some trusty charger, dig his heels under the wooden belly and canter furiously round and round and round. But no rocking horse reared at his mounting, no lions, no winged chariots received him like a god. A series of torpedo-like aeroplanes swayed where the gaily painted rocking horses should have snarled with gaudy lips and panting teeth.

Captive Aeroplanes, the yellow sign proclaimed. Rupert felt sad. So the rocking horse of his boyhood was no more. . . . Aeroplanes had come and killed his boyhood love. The only Aeroplanes in Captivity, he read; but didn't that only add to the disgrace? Wild aeroplanes, now, that would have been something—but tame aeroplanes, docile aeroplanes . . . it was awful!

So the dear old rocking horse was gone. He had crept out

unmourned, unnoticed. No poet had sung his requiem, no tall wax candles burned at his trentals. Mentally, Rupert burst into song:

> The aeroplane going whizzing by
> Shrieks to hear the rocking horse die,
> Shrieks and whistles as it goes
> Whirled through the crystal the music throws . .
> Frothing its stars, the aeroplane
> Goes snuffling round and round again. . . .
> Farewell, dear something rocking horse,
> They have stolen away your racing course,
> Robbed your hoofs of the god-like fire
> That made them run and never tire.

That wasn't so bad for an impromptu elegy on a loved one. He might be able to polish it up and sell it to some paper. But what Australian paper would accept a verse that wasn't inspired by Wordsworth or Felicia Hemans?

Poor rocking horse. Henry Ford and business efficiency had killed those old happy lazy times when you sat in one luxurious groove and were bobbed and sea-sawed without any progress, not wanting any progress, content to drink and talk and stay dignified and slothful where you were. O, these terrible American times of bustle and Bowery English. Farewell, rocking horse. Rupert was spiritually with you, he at least wept for your shades, uphappy refugees now with Pegasus and the centaurs.

> Good-bye, Rocking Horse, good-bye,
> I'm certain your ghost's not in the sky,
> A Christian limping in the train
> Of a dirty dangerous aeroplane.
> And because of the strange and appalling dearth
> Of slothful circling souls on earth
> I'm sure you haven't remained to be bored
> By Service, and Progress, and Henry Ford
> In short, dear Waster, I wish you well
> In the vicious circles you plough in Hell.

"Do let's go on one of those Captive Aeroplanes!" cried the Midget. "They look lovely."

Rupert was shocked. "My dear, my dear," he murmured, "I wouldn't dream of such a thing."

Behind him he felt the rocking-horse's ghost clap him on the back with its wooden muzzle. Bravo! they were brothers. He was a rocking horse, bogged in his own delicious rut, drunk with rum and kisses, seeing the world thrash past him, and with no more interest in its going than he felt for the motor-cars that rushed about him in the street. He was a rocking horse, prettily painted, golden-hooved, bridled and ready, but never going forward, never moving, always inevitably stuck in the mud with Wycherley's "glorious manly virtues of being very drunk and very slovenly." To hell with the tin aeroplanes!

—"What about going home?" he suggested.

THE DAMNED DEITIES

by JACK LINDSAY

AFTER A NORSE TALE GIVEN BY SCOTT IN HIS DEMONOLOGY.

[*A waggon unlimbered in a bleak and hilly place. It has curtained sides. A girl is standing looking at it, with her hands on her hips. A man enters. Evening is settling down.*]

MAN: Down there I found a good-sized patch of grass,
Muddy and green, and there I put the horses.
There they can hobble round and fill their jaws
While we nag at each other and stay hungry.
ASTRID: Mend the broken axle.
MAN: But I can't.
ASTRID: Why not?
MAN: I haven't the tools, and if I had them
I wouldn't say my mendings would be safe
If we went rumbling down a stony hilltrack
As more or less we do ten times a day—
That there's a good job for a cunning smith
And not a man you hired to whoa your horses
And see they get a fair share of the hay
We pay for—if we do, which isn't always—
And—well, there's more if I felt talkative,
But as I don't I'll say no more than this:
I couldn't mend axles if I had the tools,
And since I haven't got them I can't do it.
ASTRID: There was a smith in that last village there
Over the hills, what was its name now?
MAN: Skogn.
ASTRID: I saw him stick a sword he had just forged
Down into the watertank: like hissing light.
It ripped the glistening water into steam.
I saw him through the opened door one moment
As we lurched past. Go back and fetch him here.
MAN: And if he won't come?
ASTRID: Tell him he must come.
Say Freia bids him. Say that I, the priestess
Of Freia, Astrid, bid him come at once
Or he must answer to an angry goddess.
MAN: I'll try it.
ASTRID: Don't go meddling otherwheres,
Seeking to gulp the beer of villagers
In the excuse of helping them to make
Their evening sacrifices to the Asa.
MAN: I'll promise what a man can promise. More
I leave to jesting gods. But there's two things
No man can swear he'll keep his fingers off
If they come near his nose too ticklishly.
One's beer; the other you can guess yourself
Because you take the answer into bed
Each time that you yawn sleepwards. I admit it,
For though some men have called me bibbling sot

And some have called me a two-handed wencher,
No man has called me liar—this much said,
I'll go and fetch the smith to mend the axle—
That's if he'll come ; but I don't think he will.

[*Man goes out. After a while another man enters from the opposite side. He is a scald named Aslak.*]

ASLAK : What's this ?
ASTRID : A broken axle. Can you mend it ?
ASLAK : I have an arm as strong as any smith's
But it is used to guide the dragon's fang
And not to sow the clattering seeds of frenzy
In smutted sheds, that braver hands may reap them
In fields of sunlight matted with the glitters
Of men scaled angrily with metal—no !
ASTRID : Then you are of no use to me. Farewell.
ASLAK : No use !
ASTRID : No use, I said.
ASLAK : Is there no use
Except for smiths on the anvil of the world ?
Cannot we others forge as clear and sharp
Deeds of the hands and deeds of meeting faces ?
I'll be your smith and I'll remake you bravely,
I'll melt you, girl, into a wilder sweetness
And you shall move more fiercely through the world
Than any woman, proud with love, before—
Till every man that sees the poise of your shoulders
Shall cry : No swords had ever that fierce curve
Which makes her back so certain and so sweet ;
It would be no disgrace to lie in mud
And let that woman step upon your belly
Or plait frail bluebells into your curled hair
And send you out, dressed up in that girl's-fashion,
To hit the crowding mockery of the mart.
ASTRID : That way lies Skogn if you are going there.
ASLAK : I am not.
ASTRID : Where then are you going ?
ASLAK : Hither.
ASTRID : And now that you are here, where are you going ?
ASLAK : A little closer to you : that is all.
ASTRID : Don't think that I'm afraid of you. Stand off.
ASLAK : I wouldn't give you the fine pleasure, girl,
Of being taken by me, kicks and all,
Although I have had women to my will,
Now and again, that way. I like you, girl,
And now that we have settled I won't rape you,
Tell me what you are doing here alone.
ASTRID : The axle of the waggon snapt in two
And I am waiting for the smith to come.
ASLAK : Then I'll wait with you till the smith has come,
And then go on with you.
ASTRID : But you are going
The opposite way to us.
ASLAK : Rather, I was.
But somewhere all our journeys end, my girl.

Somewhere the traveller finds his home at last
And thinks that he will reach no other place
Where beerhorns tilted up against the moon
Flow with a richer gurgle down his throat,
And so sits down for ever boozing on
And hardly knows when the old kitchen cobwebs
Smoke out into the tavern-beams of hell.
Either the traveller sits down at last,
Or he turns back and goes the way he came,
And that's what I am doing. For a year
I walked this way and never thought what end
My travelling would find. I never thought:
Miles out from any village, on bare hills,
I'd walk the slope up halfway, then turn round
And come back, with a waggon, through the world;
But that is how the Grey Ones worked it out.
So far, no further: I have felt the jerk
And so I turn my back upon the North
And ask you where you go.
ASTRID: I do not want you.
ASLAK: Only a mile or so I go with you—
Vain as all women I can see you are.
I have other things to do than spend my life
Along the creaking hills.
ASTRID: Then I won't have you——
ASLAK: I knew that that would disappoint you, girl,
And that you wanted me to say I meant
To go with you to the foam of the world's end.
ASTRID: I didn't.
ASLAK: Not to the world's end!
ASTRID: Please leave me.
ASLAK: Now tell me why a girl with a fine face
Like yours, that could get any man she wants
And have a home filled full of bawling babies—
Or, if she wished, pick lovers six or seven,
And not a child to chill her feet at midnight
By drawing her out upon stone-floors—pray, tell me,
Why is this girl here on the evening hillside
Listening to Aslak Fitiaskalle talk?
ASTRID: Since you have told your name I give you mine,
For I'll not owe you anything, even a name:
I am a priestess of Freia, my name Astrid——
ASLAK: I bend the knee to Astrid . . . and to Freia.
[*Kneels before her; she turns away, he rises.*]
Come, Astrid, do not mind the way I talk.
I have made up so many songs in praise
Of gods that lift their hands up like the sky
And all the world is flattened into awe—
And goddesses that use the moon for mirror
And with one glance can kill a loving man,
Sucking his power out like a hungry bitch
The marrow from a bone; and so I die,
Night after night, because the moon is there
And I am singing in a lonely world

Where I have killed the kings and sent the rest
To labour in the mines and fetch me gems
From all the cracks that heaven's roots have made
In the dull earth . . . and no one left alive
Upon the bosom of the breathing earth
Whose breath comes clearly now: no one above
Save I, and somewhere you. And here I am,
And soon behind me all my thralls of earth
Shall file with aprons full of emeralds
And fill this valley with them—all for you.
ASTRID: You have made up so many songs, you said,
And then you made another song up, Aslak,
Instead of telling me what you had meant
Beneath the songs you made.
ASLAK: O nothing, Astrid—
Only that you're a fine girl, and I mean
To stay with you a while.
ASTRID: Though I say Go?
What shall I pay you then for washing down
The horses, or for getting ready at eve
Our milk and fish? I fear I cannot pay you
More than the other servant——
ASLAK: Ha, my Astrid,
I said it only to try out your spirit
And you have answered as I'd have you answer.
I've never found a girl so like my thought
Of big-lipt faces shining in the moon . . .
Astrid, I'll beg you then. Please let me stay,
Please let me, Astrid. Let me stay with you.
ASTRID: But would you go if I should bid you go?
ASLAK: And do you wish me to speak truth, or lie?
ASTRID: No, speak the truth.
ASLAK: Well then, I would not go.
ASTRID: I like you, Aslak.
ASLAK: Listen to me, Astrid.
I have killed men and thought no more about it
Than looking on their faces as they died
That I might make of them most ugly images
To stand, like severed heads on dripping stakes,
About me when I sang to mad a king.
Poor fools! they do not know what death can be
Because to them it is a sudden cloud
Of drizzling blood, wherein they run with shouts
And come out wet and tired and hoarse with shouting
And either dead or victor in the field—
But it is I who conquer both the ways,
Mocking the kings with an unreal death
They cannot hope to merit: I that am
The sodden cloud of blood and the distant shouts,
It is my voice which sends them mad for death
Because I promise wonderful gifts when I sing,
Crowns for ever burning on their heads
And biting them with a shrewd balm of power:
Furs that are thicker than a woman's hair

Loosened for love and pulled across the face
When she, in tender fear, desires to hide
From love which makes a mirror of the moon,
And the harsh fingers that should be so soft
And that are yet not harsh enough—I say,
I send them mad with things they have not seen,
Promising flowers by a hundred scents,
Flowers that are not, promised by their scents—
And so they fight, and die, and fight and conquer
But never grasp the crown which they desire
And the lost kingdom of impregnable beauty.
Therefore I have been lonely. Listen, Astrid;
Do you understand why I am lonely?
ASTRID: Yes, Aslak.
ASLAK: That is right.
ASTRID: You have been lonely
Because you did not want the crowns you gave them
And found dead faces no sweet company.
But did you never want another woman?
ASLAK: Many, and most of them I got as well;
But somehow the pale faces in the moon
Which I have seen when goddesses looked in it,
Seemed nothing. I was less than the mad kings
Who were half dazed with any mutter of glory
And only frenzied every now and then—
Not all the while—or, if it was all the while,
The restless thought spoke in small lusts for land
Or someone's oath to serve them, while for me
Always no voice could speak across the mirror.
I thought: I would some other better singer
Might charm me past all angry and jealous thoughts
With his surpassing love, so I might love
Behind his torment, saved from this worst thing.
Are you a maker of songs, Astrid? tell me . . .
Or are you but a girl whose mother looked
Full in the moon's face at that burning moment
A man's love made her love herself most wholly?
ASTRID: I have not made up songs; but I have thought
Of goddesses at night upon my pillow
And also when I walk upon the earth,
Feeling my spirit fill my body full
Like wine that plumps a skin out almost bursting—
And I have thought: This Freia that I serve
Thinks of herself thus always and that makes her
A goddess. But, someday, I shall be able
To think it also, on and on and on,
And I shall be a goddess then myself.
ASLAK: Yes, Astrid, we who serve the gods must learn
To make ourselves as great or even greater—
Else could we live?
ASTRID: We could not.
ASLAK: Aye, we could not.
It is most necessary that the gods
Should be that we may make ourselves as gods;

And, if we serve them for a time, it is
That we are seeking all the while to learn
Their secrets, that we may master them at last.
You are the girl for me, I see that, Astrid.
[*He embraces her, there is a violent knocking within the waggon.*]
ASLAK: What is that noise? have you a lover there?
By Thor!——
ASTRID: Be silent. Listen.
[*Violent banging again.*]
It is Freia.
ASLAK: Your goddess! is she shut within the waggon?
ASTRID: We go from town to town and people make
Offerings that they may see her and perhaps
May win her favour for some trick of theirs:
A safe ship or a husband safe at home—
Or else a barren wife prays for a child
And some poor farmer for more rain next year
To fatten out his seedlings, or for less
Because the corn last year was rotted down.
[*Loudly.*] What is it, Freia, that you wish of me?
VOICE: Send that man on.
ASTRID: Why should I, Freia—why?
[*There is no answer.*]
You heard her, she has said that you must go . . .
What shall we do?
ASLAK: I am ashamed for Astrid.
I'll go if she should question what's to do.
ASTRID: I didn't mean it . . . no. . . .
ASLAK: You fear her still.
And yet a moment past you spoke of learning
That proud thought which can make the arching sole
Of any foot on earth no mortal's foot,
But the proud-stepping thought of an immortal.
ASTRID: I had not thought it fully till I said it.
It was the things that you were saying to me
Which flicked my mind full of wild images
Like hares among the hedges, or an arrow
Seen only when the whizz-past wakes our senses—
And till I said it I had no such thought.
ASLAK: But now that you have said it and have thought it,
There's not a god or goddess in Valhalla
Who can unsay that thought or bring you back
To Astrid, Freia's heavy-witted slave . . .
No one but Astrid can. There you have power
Over them all.
ASTRID: I know it.
ASLAK: You, as Astrid,
Are utterly beneath their trifling fingers,
And they can rip you from the navel up
With one skim of the fingernail or tread you
Down into earth as I might stamp a tent-peg—
But they can't kill the thought that curved your back
Into the like of theirs—for if they did,
They would kill themselves as well. . . . They hate us, Astrid

And they are very cunning in their way,
But we can beat them if we wink a little ;
For they are vain, and yield their secrets up
To one who flatters them and seems to worship
Their loud rampaging up and down the earth,
Their juggling with the corn-ears and the stars—
Just like a housewife with her spoons and pots—
They give men hungry bellies to smudge souls
And souls to spoil the purring of full bellies :
That's how they make life belch with difficulties.
But he who lets them order things their way
And flatters them with serious delight,
He soon can get beneath their confidence
And learn where they are weak and make himself
Stronger than they because his laughter is craftier.
I cannot black the sun out of the sky
With one great bellow like bull-throated Thor,
But I can tickle Thor until he bellows . . .
Now that I have you, Astrid, at my side,
Thinking out beauties which put Freia down.
I must have you with me, or I am beaten, Astrid.
ASTRID : I stand beside you, Aslak, I am yours.
[*Violent banging again.*]
What is it Freia that you wish of me ?
VOICE : Send that man on.
ASTRID : O Aslak, can we dare ? . . .
I thought that I had lost all fear of Freia,
But at this moment I am frightened of her—
Such a defiance ! not with little jests,
But utterly . . . she may have greater power
Than we have guessed at, she may kill us, Aslak !
What good will all our brave thoughts do us then ?
ASLAK : She cannot kill us if we do not fear.
ASTRID : How can I think of beauty if the earth
Is tottering under my feet and the trees crashing
Around us on all sides ? How can I think
Until my body arches with clear beauty
When horror grows to noise and there is pain
Under my fingernails ? Perhaps our treason
Will let out Loki from his sharp-cut stone. . . .
O listen, can you hear the horn of Heimdall ? [*They listen.*]
ASLAK : Nothing. I have not feared yet.
ASTRID : I can hear it.
[*They listen, there is a faint sound of music.*]
ASLAK [*shouting*] : Stay, Heimdall, I forbid it. I forbid
The world to end just yet ! [*A pause.*]
ASTRID There is no sound.
ASLAK . You must not fear. Be brave, or I shall lose you.
Loki has hurled himself against the stone
And Heimdall has the horn against his lips.
That was his breath that played the echo then
Of that mad music which will smash the world,
Finding the knot which ties the Snake about
The sagging ocean, and untying it.

That was his idle heath within the horn,
And you can hear it any time you lean,
Terrified, on the sudden shove of silence
As on a broad wind. Listen rather here
To my voice telling you for ever now
That I adore you and that we together
Have fooled the gods and use them now as dolls
Which children dress and then undress to find
How men and women look beneath the covering.
For now we have ourselves to learn from, now
We can put by the games the gods have played
To make all things a secret quick with lust,
Passing from rosebuds to the rippling sun
And reindeer-horns and pines, and back again
To fishsnouts making ripples in the water.
All this is mad, and nothing, and ourselves—
Now this shall all be games we play ourselves
To find what things are growing in our minds,
And our close joy shall feed the world with lust
Which clots to roses and goes rippling back
Into the thickening sun and twists itself
To heads of reindeer lifted on the sky,
Or breaks life up with little merry snouts.
We have found the heart of things, the hidden jest—
We shall be vainer than the gods themselves
Because they are denied our happy scorn
Which walks the earth and scorns heaven more than earth
Although it scorns earth even more than gods do.
We shall be the mystery maddening them—
Now do you fear your Freia?

ASTRID: No, not I!

Our love shall make us more invulnerable
Than any god so armoured in taut magic
That there's no spear can find a pore to pierce.
And now I see how they will seek to part us,
How they will make me jealous and will strike you
With giddy lust for other flesh than mine,
Because my beauty glitters out on women,
Lending an eye, which has not dreamed itself,
A light that moves there more desirably
Because it is my wraith bidding you go.
I see how they will seek to part us, Aslak,
And all I say is that they shall not part us.

ASLAK: Then in despite of Freia let us kiss.

[They embrace; a violent banging arises; finally Freia strides out—she is a wooden idol, brightly painted and ornamented.]

FREIA: Slut, you have disobeyed me. I shall maim you
And leave you then to this man's pitying love.
So all the dreams that god him shall die out
Because there is no pity in a god.

ASLAK: But I am in the way, and I shall stop you,
Freia, you cannot pass my love and reach her.

FREIA: Away, and do not spoil my vengeance, boy.
It would be easy for me first to kill you

And then to maim her belly and her face,
As I intend. But I shall merely stun you,
That you may wake to anguish and be robbed,
By pitying her, of all you dream to gain.
ASLAK: You can do nothing, Freia, and you know it—
Else you would do it, and not quarrel here.
FREIA: Dear is a lingering vengeance to a god.
ASLAK: Then yours shall linger out the life of earth
And then shall die because the earth is dead;
But we will still be lovers, above the gods.
FREIA: Stand back there, boy!
ASLAK: Back, goddess, to your cage!
Now that we know your secrets we shall use you
As you have used us in time past. Get back
Into the shrine! You are our image now.
No more! for we are real first—get back!

[*Freia tries to pass, he draws his sword and fights with her, hacking bits of her wooden limbs off. Freia wails and falls.*]

ASTRID: O you have killed her!
ASLAK: She is still alive,
But nevermore will she come worrying us.
Dearest, come up into our bridal chamber,
And where the goddess sat and burned abroad
Our love shall lie in scorn and happiness.

[*They go up into the waggon. Dusk has fallen rapidly and it is almost dark. After a while the first man enters.*]

MAN: Where are you, Astrid? See, he wouldn't come.
I told you so. Where are you?
ASTRID [*from the waggon*]: I am here.
Go down and see to the horses.
MAN: I'm too tired.
ASTRID: Go to the horses!
MAN: Alright then, I will.
Astrid, they wouldn't give me any beer:
I tell you that to please you—the mean bastards!
What the hell is this I'm tripping on?

[*Stumbles over Freia in the dark and goes out. After a while Astrid and Aslak appear at entrance of waggon.*]

ASTRID: I think I hear a noise of travellers.
Here now, I'll light this lantern. Do you think
You could mend Freia so it wouldn't show
Where she is broken?
ASLAK: Very like I could.
I'll have a try . . .
Here, help me up with her.

[*They get Freia back into the waggon.*]

It won't show in this half-light anyhow.
To-morrow I'll mend her better with some nails.
ASTRID: There, that will do. They may be worth some money.

[*Some travellers enter.*]

Sirs, could you help some troubled worshippers
Whose axletree has snapt and stranded here,
Distressed and hungry, till we fetch some smith.

I have the goddess Freia in this waggon.
I am the pious tender of her shrine
And, in my love of her, I carry round
The image of the goddess, town to town,
That it may scatter its blessings far and wide.
It is a very powerful image, this.
A merchant in Drontheim saved a ship at sea
After it was reputed three months sunk
Because of spells a Laplander had made—
And when the men returned, those whole three months
Were clean wiped out from all their memories,
Which shows that Freia brought them back from death.
More I can tell you if you wish to hear.
MAN : Let us behold the goddess' face my girl,
And we shan't pass you by without some alms.
ASTRID : Behold her.

[*Pulls curtain and lifts lantern, Aslak sings to his harp.*]

ASLAK : Look on her face and behold
Her who makes beautiful faces
Look out, at this very moment,
Wondering from the window,
Waiting for you to come home.
Think of Freia when your wife
Kisses you as you enter,
Give glory unto Freia,
For hers is that warmth, and the torchlight
Blurring the face with beauty,
Making the face for a moment
The face of Freia herself
As she leans back laughing loudly,
At the tables in Valhalla,
And the wine runs down her chin
And mingles upon her nipple
With the small sweet drop of milk
Which for ever is glistening there.
Happy the man in whose meadows
A drop of that milk has fallen,
Happy the man on whose wife
Has fallen that milky wine.
Give glory unto Freia !
His meadows shall feed fat cows,
His wife shall bear him sons
And yet call him into bed
As softly as ere the first son !
MAN : Here, take this money, priestess, and pray ask
The goddess that my wife may grow like that.
ASTRID : Thank you, sir.
ASLAK : Thank you.
MEN : Good night, and good hap.

[*Travellers go out.*]

ASLAK : How much did they give you ?
ASTRID : Take it.
ASLAK : A fine life !

We shall go on this way, and men shall give
The coins whereby we live, to Freia here.
No other way but this has salt enough
To lengthen out our love and make us laugh
Gently for ever. I could madden kings
Or chant for merchants, chaffering prophesies,
And buy a fresh girl every day of the week—
But none of that is satisfying enough,
This is the only way a man may live
And yet call love his own. Ah, kiss me, Astrid!
I am grown weak with laughter, like a god,
And would be man again. A little while
Make me a man above your kisses, Astrid,
And then I'll talk myself into a rapture
So furious that we shall rise unseen
Over the wrangling banquets of the gods,
And make another nest of plaited clouds . . .
Life is worth living, Astrid?
ASTRID: Yes, with you.

EX CATHEDRA

☛ THE LONDON APHRODITE is a deliberate attempt to re-affirm Beauty, critically and constructively, in six numbers only concerned with delight not disintegration.

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